

gained in 2012 could not be carried forward. Once the elections were over, the independence debate had become somewhat confined to the political sphere, but two large-scale civil events were being prepared: *Òmnium Cultural*'s 'Concert for Freedom', mentioned in chapter 1, and the ANC's human chain or *Via Catalana* (Catalan Way). This took place on 11 September 2013, and was inspired by a similar event in which the capitals of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were linked by a human chain in 1989 during their own independence struggles. Rather than trying to better the turnout at the demonstration in 2012, the organisers set a much lower target for participation based on the number that would be needed to form a chain from the French border in the north to Valencia in the south, passing through Girona, Barcelona and Tarragona. Once again, an impressively thorough organisation saw the different parts of the route being filled by asking participants to sign up in advance on the ANC's website. In the end, an estimated 1.6 million people took part, just beating the number of participants in September 2012.



Two opposing dynamics emerged in the period after 2005: the strengthening of the pro-independence consensus, and the reactive emergence of various forms of opposition to this. What Lluch terms 'the intersubjective relations of reciprocity' between a large number of Catalans and the Spanish government and media were ruptured by the conflict around the Statute (Lluch, 2010: 342). The fissure then widened every time an event occurred that Catalans could attribute to the neglect or contempt of them by the State. Sociologist and pro-independence campaigner Salvador Cardús stresses that pro-independence sentiment in Catalonia 'is not just something born of the here and now [ . . . ]. On the contrary: it is the result of a long, continuous and well-documented process of disappointment' (Cardús, 2010: 14).<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that the number of Catalans sharing this sense of disappointment was increased substantially by the events outlined in this chapter. One of the factors that facilitated this was the deliberate attempt by pro-independence ideologues to prise apart questions of identity and support for independence – a process that will be the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### Political Discourse

#### The Triumph of Rationality?

As was noted in the Introduction to this volume, Viva Ona Bartkus theorises secession movements in terms of the constant performance of 'cost/benefit' calculations (Bartkus, 1999: 4; see also Sorens, 2005). A change in the political context will shift the equation either towards or away from independence as a viable proposition at any given time. Even a long history of grievances is not enough in itself to produce an active attempt at secession. Rather, 'For a community to decide to secede, it must perceive a change in its circumstances and its political alternatives' (Bartkus 1999: 8). While I disagree with elements of Bartkus's specific analysis of the Catalan situation in the period in which she was writing,<sup>1</sup> the concept of cost/benefit calculations does help us to understand the current rise in interest in independence in Catalonia, since recent events have focussed Catalans' minds on just such calculations.

Naturally, these events speak for themselves only up to a point, and political discourse is central to the process of making Catalans aware of their apparent new political alternatives and the factors they should take into account in their calculations. Politicians and pundits set out to give their 'expert' view, claiming 'to be not only "right" in a cognitive sense, but "right" in a moral sense' about what these alternatives and factors are, and how Catalans should act on them (Chilton, 2004: 117). Just as importantly, they need to make people care enough about the subject to bother to listen to their claims at all, especially those who have not traditionally recognised themselves as being interpellated by separatist discourse. As Bartkus points out, 'leaders cannot instigate a [secession] crisis without mass support' (Bartkus, 1999: 5); moreover, the demonstrable size of this support is directly related to the perceived legitimacy of the secessionist movement. Leaders also need to be able to persuade the public that any attempt at secession would not carry too heavy a price.

The analysis in this chapter will therefore focus on political discourse, as expressed through speeches and published writings, and as reported in the

media. Its purpose is to show how, over the period from 2005 to 2013, a series of simplified messages about independence has been generated, transmitted, and widely accepted – to the point of being accepted as *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1986: 471) – even in some cases by Catalans who do not support independence. Behind this process lies a stress on the *rationality* of the idea of secession, distancing the pro-independence movement from sentimental or identitarian arguments, which are often instead attributed to the anti-independence constituency. This chapter will focus on three key claims: (1) that one does not have to feel a strong sense of Catalan identity to want independence, and arguments relating to welfare and the economy are just as legitimate; (2) that autonomy is fundamentally inadequate and federalism is not a viable alternative, therefore the only solution is independence; and (3) that Catalans have the democratic right to decide their own future. All three arguments rely on explicit cost/benefit calculations, some of which relate to economic well-being or political recognition, and some of which draw on more intangible aspects such as democratic rights. However, the stress on taking a rational approach to these calculations cannot hide the fact that they also have a clear moral and emotional resonance for many Catalans, a subject that is briefly examined in the final part of this chapter.

### From Identity to the Economy?

As we noted in the Introduction, Catalan ethnic identity is comparatively 'thin', although that does not make it unimportant (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 73–4). Individuals still have a strong sense of what it means to them to self-identify as Catalan (Brubaker, 2004: 42), but it is hard to define the term in such a way as to indicate a coherent ethnic category, let alone a group (Brubaker, 2004: 12–13). Furthermore, mainstream, contemporary Catalan nationalism has always consciously defined itself in civic rather than ethnic terms (Brubaker, 2004: 134–5; Conversi, 1997: 192–6, 208–21). Where particular identity markers can be said to have both ethnic and civic features, it is the civic element that is stressed, especially by framing this within a discourse of inclusivity.

The prime example of this is the Catalan language, which has long been viewed as a mechanism of integration for new Catalans (Conversi, 1997: 194–6). The primacy of language as a marker of groupness has generally compensated for the lack of an ethnically-based definition of who is or is not Catalan. Indeed, as a collective noun, 'Catalans' would be something of an empty signifier if it were not for the association of being Catalan with speaking Catalan (Fernández, 2008: 234; Serrano, 2013b: 146). During the

Franco dictatorship, Catalans had been forced to relegate key aspects of their identity to the private sphere, because of restrictions on language, culture and the political expression of non-Spanish identities. Not only this, but a large number of immigrants from the south of Spain had entered Catalonia in the 1960s and 70s, changing the linguistic balance of Barcelona and some other major towns, and prompting a need for a new discourse of inclusivity that would also encourage these people to learn Catalan and become involved in Catalan culture (Conversi, 1997: 208–17).

With the advent of democracy and Catalan autonomy, Jordi Pujol and CiU therefore formulated a discourse that spoke primarily of language, identity, and the desire to construct an inclusive and prosperous Catalan society. Part of this discourse involved the rejection of separatism, and the assertion that the demand for autonomy was primarily based on the need to protect and enhance Catalan identity, rather than on political and economic factors (Conversi, 1997: 172; MacInness, 2006: 687). This became the hegemonic discourse in Catalan nationalism at the time, although it was of course criticised from both inside and outside Catalonia: by some non-Catalans who felt that the insistence on identity was being used hypocritically to cover up Catalan material greed, and by the Catalan political parties who were trying to challenge Pujol's hegemony.

One of these parties was ERC. From 1989 to 1996, under the leadership of Àngel Colom, the party had developed a clear pro-independence stance, couched in terms of identity and nationhood – i.e. within the same basic parameters as Pujol's non-separatist discourse. According to Jaime Lluch, 'the social and political economy axes were non-existent in ERC's discourse during the period of Colom's leadership' (Lluch, 2010: 352). It was not until Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira took over the leadership in 1996 that ERC's discourse was re-focussed onto the perceived economic and political benefits of secession. While certainly not dismissing language and identity, his view (as expressed in his 2003 book *El futur a les mans* (The Future in Our Hands)) was that these were not enough as the basis of a political project. Instead, he advocated a 'new Catalanism of well-being' (Carod-Rovira, 2003: 91),<sup>2</sup> and later expressed this even more starkly as a Catalanism that comes from the head and the pocket, rather than the heart (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 55). In other words, Catalans should be seeking independence because they will be materially, rather than 'spiritually', better off.

It is worth looking in detail at Carod-Rovira's thoughts because many of the ideas he expressed several years ago now form part of the standard arguments in favour of independence. In particular, his book *2014*, published in 2008, has been influential in contributing to the independence debate and the pressure for a referendum. This is partly because of the



publicity it generated at the time of publication (when he was Vice-President of the *Generalitat*), which included the publication of some extracts in *El Periódico* and a review in *El País* (Vilaregut, 2008). The ideas presented in the book were reinforced and further developed in a speech given in November 2009 with the title 'Goodbye nationalism, long live the nation!' (Carod-Rovira, 2009).<sup>3</sup> As has already been noted, the most interesting feature of his discourse at this time was the downplaying and even dismissal of matters of identity as a reason for supporting independence: a radical departure from the legacy of Pujolism.

Carod-Rovira's intention was to separate support for independence from nationalism, and identification with pro-independence arguments from feelings related to Catalan identity. Although it is sometimes repetitive and unstructured, the book makes numerous clearly understandable statements along those lines, indicating that it is not just aimed at readers who generally follow political debates but is attempting to reach a wider audience. Carod-Rovira makes his basic position clear early on: it is not necessary to consider oneself a nationalist to want independence for Catalonia, 'it is only necessary to want a better life for yourself and your loved ones' (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 16).<sup>4</sup> He then constructs an argument that urges Catalans to think with their heads about independence, rather than their hearts or their 'guts' (27). In his view, the kind of pro-independence sentiment that is born of a gut reaction against 'Catalanophobia' from the rest of Spain is 'adolescent', and has had the unfortunate consequence of making Catalans suspicious of the state as an institution (27, 43). On the contrary, he claims, 'the only thing that stops you having to give explanations as to why you are as you are, do what you do, speak how you speak and want what you want is to have a state' (49).<sup>5</sup> There is therefore no shame in wanting independence for economic reasons, since this is a perfectly rational position (55). Furthermore, Catalans should need no further justification for asking for independence other than the fact that they want it, and those who are in favour of independence should dedicate their time to make sure that this desire becomes hegemonic (85).

Carod-Rovira then goes on to suggest that when support for independence becomes a matter of rationality rather than sentiment, it also ceases to be inextricably bound up with identity. 'Loving Spain from Catalonia, being and feeling *also* Spanish in Catalonia, *more or much more* Spanish than Catalan in Catalonia – perhaps even *just* Spanish – is perfectly compatible with arguing for Catalan independence' (156).<sup>6</sup> Identities are complex and multi-layered, and therefore identification with Catalonia is more important than an inherited identity in constructing a shared sense of belonging (159–62). Neither identity nor nationalism are therefore necessary or suffi-

cient conditions for supporting independence: all that is required is to want a better quality of life (258).

Carod-Rovira calls this 'practical sovereigntism', and in his review of the book Ricard Vilaregut labels it 'pragmatic independentism' (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 258; Vilaregut, 2008). The idea is not of course Carod's alone, although he does seem to have taken it further than others. His ERC colleague Joan Ridao, for example, explicitly disagreed with the idea that it is possible to be in favour of independence without also being a nationalist: since a desire for independence is a desire to see the state become congruent with the nation, 'all independentism is consubstantially nationalist' (Ridao, 2005: 174).<sup>7</sup> Even so, he seems to disagree more with the way in which Carod-Rovira phrases the concept, rather than with its substance: he suggests it is just a clumsy way of asserting the voluntarist form of nationalism over the organicist form (178). Carod-Rovira appears to concede this point in his speech of 4 November 2009 by continually speaking of 'essentialist nationalism' rather than 'nationalism' *tout court* (Carod-Rovira, 2009). He makes it clear in the speech that banishing essentialist discourses of identity and nationalism is a prerequisite for finding the kind of broad-based support necessary for an independent future (Carod-Rovira, 2009: 15).

What Carod-Rovira is advocating, then, is a collective push for independence based not on an abstract notion of the nation itself but on the welfare of each individual member. Catalans are being encouraged to act in their own best interests, and to safeguard the everyday elements with which they most identify rather than the continuation of a supposedly immutable identity. If their concerns are primarily about living standards and the future prospects for themselves and their family, then this is just as legitimate as wanting to protect their right to have their children educated in Catalan or to call Catalonia a nation. This 'practical sovereigntism' of 'the pocket' is indeed one of the directions that the dominant pro-independence discourse in Catalonia has taken – although not of course through Carod-Rovira's efforts alone. A survey in 2009 listed economic factors as the second most mentioned reason for supporting independence (by 62.3% of respondents) (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya/Instituto DYM, 2009), with a 2011 survey putting them first (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2011: 28–9). Arguments relating to identity are still given by respondents to both surveys, but they come some way down the list. In contrast, those who had responded that they would vote against independence were actually more likely to attribute their decision to opinions about identity or 'sentiment/conviction', with 60.8% citing the latter in the 2009 survey (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya/Instituto DYM, 2009).

Of course, this lays Catalans open to the charge that the short-term economic situation of Spain is a more important factor in the rise in support for independence than any other. Pro-independence campaigners tend to refute this charge by pointing out that Catalonia's economy has fundamentally different characteristics to other areas of Spain and has never been properly supported by the economic policies of the state (Canadell, 2013). The current crisis therefore highlights an existing reality rather than creating a new one. It could also be argued that the desire for independence for economic reasons is a logical extension of the regionalist discourse espoused by CiU under Pujol. As Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall point out, decentralisation is increasingly being viewed (globally) as 'simply the means to an end, a technical solution to the problem of economic organisation', and treating it in this way has made it easier for central governments to give concessions to separatists without losing too much credibility (Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008: 58, 61). Catalans originally put their faith in this route but have been increasingly disappointed by its results. Independence thus becomes the 'technical solution' to the economic problems that decentralisation has failed to address, if only because of the apparent impossibility of achieving a deal on greater fiscal autonomy. However, these arguments are more relevant to the elites than to an average Catalan. On the other hand, Carod-Rovira is careful to address himself primarily to those who are concerned about getting by from day to day and providing for their family's future. This is of course consistent with ERC's left republican ideology, and is one reason why the more business-orientated CiU was unable to capture more pro-independence votes in the 2012 elections. Nevertheless, both the 'elite' and 'popular' versions of the economic argument depart from the same basic premise: that Catalans would be financially better off if Catalonia were independent.

Alfons López Tena provides an example of the more exaggerated rhetoric stemming from this discourse in his book *Catalunya sota Espanya* (Catalonia Under Spain):

Now the Catalan national project can be appealing not just to those who feel Catalan, and therefore mistreated, but also to those who feel both Spanish and citizens of Catalonia, and therefore mistreated; because this mistreatment is also felt, not nationally through the imposition of the Spanish nation, but through economic and fiscal mistreatment, and, in the last instance, as a result of the domination of a majority over a minority. [ . . . ] The Spanish discriminate against them as Catalans, even if they do not regard themselves as such.<sup>8</sup> (López Tena, 2007: 162)

Evidence that this message is getting through to new sections of the community is provided by the creation in 2013 of the organisation *Símate*, which represents Catalans whose first language is Spanish but who are nevertheless in favour of independence, primarily for economic reasons.<sup>9</sup>

The increasing acceptance of economic concerns as a legitimate argument for independence in terms similar to those advocated by Carod-Rovira (since well before the financial crisis) has brought into the open economic cost/benefit calculations that might previously have been considered undesirable because of the danger of reinforcing the long-standing stereotype of Catalans as mean and selfish (Pujol, 2007). Pro-independence campaigners are now happy to air these arguments, claiming that one of the costs of remaining in Spain is to accept limitations on Catalonia's capacity for economic growth which in turn have a detrimental effect on the well-being of all Catalans. One of the benefits of secession, therefore, would be the capacity for a new Catalan state to enact policies that are tailor-made to Catalonia's economic needs and strengths, thus benefitting all of its residents, whatever their origins. The effectiveness of this message is confirmed by Ivan Serrano's analysis of data from the surveys carried out by the *Generalitat's* Centre for Opinion Studies, which shows that support for fiscal autonomy has 'an independent and positive effect on attitudes towards independence even among groups with dual identities' (Serrano, 2013a: 541).

However, despite the popular appeal of these arguments – especially during a time of mass unemployment, wage and welfare cuts, and austerity measures – questions relating to identity remain important. As Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall note, although economic justifications are becoming increasingly central in demands for decentralisation and self-determination across the world, these have a complex relationship with traditional identity discourses and are not simply replacing them (Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008). As Silvina Vázquez remarks, Herderian ideas of the primordial nature of the national culture and identity are still used to justify the argument that Catalonia is a nation and therefore deserves differential treatment within the state (Vázquez, 2011: 57). Furthermore, this vision of Catalonia as a 'natural' entity is often contrasted with a discourse that sees the state as a purely political construct or even an 'imposition' (57), with the implication that independence would restore Catalonia to its true, organic nature – not in ethnic terms but as a polity. In contrast, interviewees in Vázquez's study who were not in favour of independence regarded the idea as an unnatural 'breaking' of an entity that is coherent as it is (the Spanish state) (58). Vázquez's research was not designed to look more closely at these ideas of identity, but nevertheless she concludes that identity remains at the heart of questions related to self-government and is still



a crucial determining factor in pre-disposing Catalans towards support for independence (63). A quantitative study carried out by Muñoz and Tormos in 2012 supports this view, and indicates that those with the strongest preference for independence are the most likely to justify this with reference to their Catalan identity (Muñoz and Tormos, 2012: 31). Economic arguments have therefore added to, rather than detracting from, pre-existing dispositions based on identity, broadening the appeal of independence without losing existing supporters.

### The Disappointment of Autonomy and the Impossibility of Federalism

One of the problems with economic arguments for independence is that they necessarily have to be accompanied by reassurances that Catalonia would indeed be better off, and that any short-term economic decline caused by the secession process would be brief. Of course, this is very hard to prove because of the lack of comparable precedents, as well as uncertainty over key issues such as continued membership of the EU and the generosity or otherwise of the settlement with Spain. Fears related to these questions may make potential supporters of independence look for less risky alternatives (Hale, 2008: 76), which is why it is important to accompany any reassurances about the benefits of independence with arguments as to the unfeasibility of any other potential avenues. Pro-independence campaigners therefore devote significant effort to convincing their fellow Catalans that neither enhanced autonomy nor federalism are viable options. In both cases, the basis of the argument is that there is no likelihood of any Spanish government agreeing to implement a meaningful version of either. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the way that the two are described: Spain's 'experiment' with autonomy is couched as a failure and disappointment that belongs firmly in the past, while federalism – especially of the asymmetrical variety – is an impossible dream that could only come to pass in a utopian future.

As far as enhanced autonomy is concerned, the enforced changes to Catalonia's new Statute of Autonomy before it was approved in Madrid and the ruling of the Constitutional Court in 2010 are presented as concrete proof that Catalonia cannot achieve what it wants within the framework of Spain's State of Autonomies. Similarly, the mass demonstration on 10 July 2010 is portrayed as a sign that the majority of Catalans are already convinced of this fact (Sobrequés i Callicó, 2013: 124). Indeed, statistics

from the CEO do show a marked fall in support for the option of autonomy after mid-2010 (Serrano, 2013b: 128). Despite being able to take advantage of these clear landmarks, commentators still engage in detailed analyses of the failure of autonomy in order to prove that this was caused by fundamental problems in the design of the Spanish state. This is to show that the events surrounding the new Statute in 2005–10 were not simply attributable to unfavourable short-term circumstances which might be rectified in future, and to confirm that Catalonia will never find a comfortable place in Spain on its own terms (Strubell i Trueta, 2008: 89).

There is no doubt that during the process of drafting the Spanish Constitution of 1978, there was no intention of creating the generalised system of autonomy that eventually resulted. As Javier Tusell puts it 'no one had even an approximate idea of what would be the final result of the process of decentralisation' (Tusell, 1999: 172).<sup>10</sup> The initial aim was to solve the specific problem of Basque and Catalan demands for a degree of self-rule, but what actually resulted was a complete regionalisation of Spain. Moreover, as Juan Pablo Fusi argues, there was only a limited understanding of the precise nature of the Basque and Catalan demands themselves. In *España: La evolución de la identidad nacional* (Spain: The Evolution of its National Identity) he comments that the provisions in the Spanish Constitution could never have 'solved' the problem of Basque and Catalan nationalism that they were ostensibly designed to tackle, 'because the nature of Catalan and Basque nationalism had nothing to do with the way the state was structured' (Fusi, 2000: 275).<sup>11</sup> It was assumed that reversing Francoist centralisation was the key to solving the problem of Basque and Catalan alienation. What was missing was an understanding that Basque and Catalan identity were 'historical realities, springing from long processes of consolidation and reinforcement of their own personality or differentiated cultural identity' (276).<sup>12</sup> Since Basque and Catalan nationalism were not simply products of Spain's centralising tendencies, they would not disappear as a result of decentralisation.

Given that the State of Autonomies was created largely by accident, it is not surprising that – as Salvador Cardús puts it – Spain 'felt threatened by its own invention' (Cardús, 2013: 97). As a result, for more than 30 years the central government's attitude to the regions has been characterised by a dynamic that couples administrative decentralisation with a preference for the homogenisation of regional powers (Serrano, 2013b: 59). This approach had the benefit of putting Spain in a better position to cope with 'new regionalist' agendas that were gaining momentum in Europe in the 1980s and 90s (Keating, 2000). However, it also put paid to the idea that the Catalans, Basques and Galicians could expect special treatment based on

their historic differences. Many Catalanists view this as a betrayal and say that Catalonia's high level of support for the Constitution was based on the assumption that it provided for asymmetrical devolution.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, they argue that the state is increasingly encroaching onto competencies that the Constitution originally reserved for the Autonomous Communities (López Tena, 2007: 98–9).

Not only have successive central governments fought against giving further powers to the Basque Country and Catalonia, other Autonomous Communities also worry that they will be left behind if certain regions have powers that they do not. Part of the problem here is that the ACs that do not claim a differentiated national identity have been unable to articulate a successful regionalist discourse without borrowing from the nationalist rhetoric of the 'historic nations'. Balfour and Quiroga correctly state that the regions feel that they need to be seen to have a strong identity in order to justify the existence of their regional institutions (Balfour and Quiroga, 2007: 74–5). However, there are many justifications for regional government that have nothing to do with identity but are based on arguments about good governance and economic viability, although these carry more weight from a top-down than from a bottom-up perspective (Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008).

Furthermore, as Margaret Moore points out in relation to Canada, many residents of territories with no sense of a sub-state national identity tend to be in favour of a strong nation-state, but instead they are presented with ever-stronger regional government, at the insistence of their regional political elites who personally benefit from this greater power (Moore, 2001: 118). The attitudes of regional political elites in Andalusia, Valencia and the Community of Madrid appear to confirm Moore's suggestion that 'granting political autonomy to groups when this is not required from a peace and stability perspective may create an institutional basis for exaggerating differences in order to expand power and jurisdiction' (ibid). Not only are regional politicians dependent on the central government for the legitimisation and expansion of their powers, but the main parties – especially the PP and PSOE – depend on their representatives in the ACs to support their state-wide policies and help to enhance their popularity with the Spanish electorate. This mutual dependency makes it difficult for the central government to give any concessions to a particular region without ensuring that the same is given to all of the ACs. Nor has the central government shown much of a desire to give such concessions. In fact, Luis Moreno goes as far as to say that 'The greediness of the centre towards the periphery may have been the most evident of the misguided tendencies of the country's political modernization' (Moreno, 2001: 138).

In this context, it is relatively easy to dismiss the idea of enhanced autonomy as a way forward (even in a future not conditioned by the particular brand of Spanish nationalism of the current PP government). Indeed, many of the same arguments can be applied to federalism, since this too would only come about with the consent and goodwill of the Spanish state. This is why the apparently more radical solution of independence is viewed by many as the only practical way forward, since this could be a unilateral decision (Cardús, 2010: 33; Carod-Rovira, 2008: 135–45). Once again it is interesting to take Carod-Rovira's thoughts in 2014 as an example of this argument, especially bearing in mind his role in moving ERC from a (con)federal to an independentist position. First, he points out that the only mention of federalism in the Constitution is a prohibition on the federation of ACs, which was specifically aimed at stopping Catalonia from attempting to negotiate formal links with the other Catalan-speaking territories. There is therefore no possibility of creating a federal Spain without passing first through the laborious process of devising a totally new Constitution (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 137). Secondly, it is far from clear what the constituent units of a federal Spain would be, with possibilities ranging from a federation based on all the existing ACs and Autonomous Cities, to an alliance with far fewer units that would be defined culturally and linguistically rather than by current politico-administrative borders.

Carod-Rovira criticises the PSOE for paying lip-service to the idea of federalism while doing absolutely nothing to implement this when in power, and concludes that even if it did undertake a federal reform this would only result in a new version of the current stress on homogenised powers (known as 'coffee all round') (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 139). Catalonia is the only region where federal ideas have a long political tradition, and there is very little genuine support for federalism in the rest of Spain. Catalan attempts to 'fix Spain', for example by proposing the use of languages other than Spanish in the Senate, are dismissed by Carod-Rovira as 'pathetic' and 'ridiculous'. Here, he develops an extended seafaring metaphor, mocking Catalan desires 'to have a place on the ship's bridge', which

have been dashed time and time again against the rocks of cyclopean intolerance, uniformity and centralism. There is nothing else for it but to change the ship, the sea and the destination port. Any other route is destined, from the outset, to end in shipwreck, and this is clear even before setting sail. The next vessel we charter must be entirely ours, from the ship's identification number to the flag it flies. And if we have to share the bridge with someone, this can only be with the EU, not with Spain.<sup>14</sup> (141–2)



Carod-Rovira also dismisses asymmetrical federalism by asserting that anywhere this has been tried it has failed, citing the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia as prime examples, and making specific points relating to the cases of Quebec and Belgium. Indeed, many academic experts would agree with him, although John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary attribute this failure to the poor design of the states rather than to the idea of asymmetrical federalism itself (McGarry and O'Leary, 2007: 192). McGarry and O'Leary's 'recipe' for a successful design includes a commitment to 'consociational government at the centre' (McGarry and O'Leary, 2007: 198), an element that is also stressed by Ronald L. Watts: 'effective autonomous "self-rule" by itself is insufficient. Institutions and processes for effective "shared rule" have been equally essential in order to provide the glue to hold the different national groups within a federation together' (Watts, 2007: 231). The seeming impossibility of achieving this condition in Spain has led even the prominent former federalist and internationally-renowned academic Ferran Requejo to declare that he has 'stopped being an idiot' and now supports independence (Sallés, 2012).

The growing strength of this dismissal of federalism prompted an attempted fight-back in the run-up to the 2012 elections by a group of left-wing intellectuals, and the subsequent creation of an association called *Federalistes d'Esquerra* (Left-Wing Federalists – FE). While Carod-Rovira had poured scorn on federalism as a 'magic' (i.e. impossible) solution to Catalonia's troubles, the joint letter that prompted the formation of FE used the same adjective to dismiss the option of independence (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 136; Albert, 2012). The one-hundred signatories state that the economic arguments for independence are based on false premises and draw attention away from the real issue, which is the dual Spanish and Catalan identity of most of the population. Their own analysis has led them to conclude that 'a comparison of social benefits and costs is much more favourable in the case of a better federal position for Catalonia within Spain and Europe than in the case of independence'.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, they recognise the real challenges involved in achieving this:

We are not unaware of the difficulties of what we are proposing and the genuine sensation up to the present of a certain failure of this proposition. On one hand, because the majority Spanish left has not wanted to play this card in any significant way, and on the other because the Spanish right is profoundly nationalist and takes refuge in constitutional immobilism whenever it is convenient to do so.<sup>16</sup>

Their specific call for voters not to abandon left-federal options in the

November elections was followed by the foundation of FE and a further determination to keep federal options alive in public debate in the run-up to the next Spanish general elections, scheduled for 2015. Nevertheless, at the time of writing FE had not been able to come up with anything like the kind of forceful argument in favour of federalism that others had found for dismissing it.

The weakness of this pro-federal discourse and the internal disarray of the PSC – examined in chapter 1 – have made it easier for pro-independence campaigners to claim that the only choice is between independence and the status quo. Nevertheless, in 2013 a new player entered this game when the leader of UDC Josep Antoni Duran Lleida began openly to press for a 'third way', despite the potential damage this might cause to the unity of CiU. Alarmed at Artur Mas's conversion to the pro-independence cause and the influence of ERC in pushing for a referendum, Duran proposed an alternative solution based on a fiscal pact, full cultural/linguistic sovereignty including control over education, Catalan participation in international institutions, and a reform of the Constitution to recognise the Catalans' 'right to decide' (Barbeta, 2013). Duran's idea was to find a compromise that would address the main grievance of the Catalans – the denial of Catalan sovereignty – while appeasing the PP by taking the focus off independence. Artur Mas gave the proposal a polite but dismissive response that was also addressed to the PSC's support for federalism: 'I'm not saying no to third ways, but the fact is that the third way is the one we have always taken, and if we are where we are it is because third ways have not worked' ((Agències), 2013).<sup>17</sup>

Despite the difficulty of making a convincing argument for federalism in the present circumstances, Silvina Vázquez's study reveals a high level of support for the concept of federalism *per se* among ordinary Catalans (Vázquez, 2011: 54–5). Interestingly, those with a higher level of formal education tended to think of federalism in asymmetrical terms, while those with fewer studies equated it with an enhanced version of 'coffee all round' that might bring more competencies but would not have any particular benefits for Catalan identity (Vázquez, 2011: 54). This might be explained by the complex nature of the idea of asymmetrical federalism and the lack of successful models with which Catalans can easily identify, in contrast to the symmetrical versions of Germany and the USA cited by those with lower levels of education. Another of Vázquez's findings is that as well as having a high level of education, those who supported asymmetrical federalism were also generally satisfied with the functioning of democracy, whereas this variable made no difference in support for symmetrical federalism. This seems logical, given that in the current climate, plumping for

asymmetrical federalism requires a higher degree of faith that the fundamental democratic conditions would be solid enough for this to come about if a majority supported it.

Vázquez's 'political satisfaction index' was derived from the CEO's data, as reported in their thrice-yearly studies on political opinion (Vázquez, 2011: 13). This is a fairly broad-ranging index that does not differentiate between elements of satisfaction/dissatisfaction related specifically to the Catalan political context and those that derive from wider political and economic factors (Vázquez, 2011: 65). However, when Jaime Lluch analysed attitudes towards the central state, specifically, in Catalonia and Quebec, he reached a slightly different conclusion: nationalists with

highly decentralizing political orientations [ . . . ] have negative or neutral attitudes toward the central state and the perceived nationalism of the 'majority nation', while less-decentralizing nationalists (federalists and teleological autonomists) have positive or neutral attitudes toward the central state and have no grievance against 'majority nation' nationalism. (Lluch, 2012: 454).

This suggests that an individual's shift from a federalist to a secessionist position is most likely to be motivated by a change in attitude towards the central state, possibly as a direct reaction against 'majority nation' nationalism. In other words, the balance of the cost/benefit analysis associated specifically with the state swings from an emphasis on the benefits of remaining a member, to a preoccupation with the costs of doing so.

Viva Bartkus views the perception that there has been a significant reduction in the benefits of membership as more salient to secession movements in democratic nation-states than an escalation of the costs (Bartkus, 1999: 168–9). While a reduction in benefits is certainly a key factor, the power of discourses relating to the cost of membership should not be underestimated, especially in persuading supporters of federalism and enhanced autonomy to switch their preference to independence. Although phrased in different ways, the primary message currently being transmitted by supporters of Catalan independence is that continued membership of the Spanish state entails an unacceptable cost: that Catalans cannot be everything they should be, politically, economically and culturally. Furthermore, both federalism and enhanced autonomy are portrayed as ineffective methods for reducing these costs.

## The Right to Decide

If one of the attractions of independence over other alternatives is that it could come about as the result of a decision made by the Catalans alone, then this pre-supposes the existence of a mechanism for taking such a step. While arguments in favour of a unilateral declaration are gaining ground within pro-independence circles, this is still largely seen as a last resort because of international reluctance to concede its legitimacy (Serrano, 2013b). The emphasis remains on the use of a referendum to determine the will of the Catalan people, with the Scottish example serving as an indication of how this might become a reality.

In political discourse, arguments for the legitimacy of a referendum have largely coalesced around the issue of the Catalans' 'right to decide'. While influenced by the use of this concept in other nationalist movements (most obviously in the Basque Country (Keating and Bray, 2006)), Catalans have made it their own ever since the debates around the new Statute of Autonomy. It signifies an assertion that Catalonia is a sovereign entity and therefore has the democratic right to hold a referendum. However, the Spanish Constitution recognises only Spain as a sovereign entity, and this fact is used by the Spanish government to block any possibility of a referendum. As we have seen, this attitude has been a primary factor in mobilising Catalan civil society and was the direct target of the *Via Catalana* protest of 11 September 2013. Moreover, under Spanish law, only the state can call a referendum of any kind, and so any attempt by the Catalan Parliament to organise one would be illegal. The raft of local consultations sparked by the first one held by Arenys de Munt in 2009 were therefore organised by volunteer groups without any institutional involvement, despite often having the 'moral support' of local councils. A 'Law of Popular Consultations by Referendum' was passed by the Catalan Parliament in March 2010, but this makes clear that the law operates only in the areas that are within the competence of the *Generalitat* (independence not, of course, being one of them) and that the authorisation of the state is necessary for any consultation to take place.<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of 2013 a different approach was therefore being planned based on two possible routes: a petition to the state to devolve to Catalonia the power to hold a referendum on independence; and a new Law of Consultations in Catalonia to provide for a non-binding vote if this petition was unsuccessful.

The discourse of the 'right to decide' is clearly a claim for Catalan sovereignty in the face of these restrictions, but it also functions as a unifying force in an otherwise fragmented nationalist movement. Terms such as 'independence', 'sovereignty', 'self-determination' and 'l'Estat propi'<sup>19</sup> are



used in different ways by different political parties and are subject to conflicting interpretations. On the other hand, 'the right to decide' encompasses all of these terms; or to cite Salvador Cardús's critical way of putting it, it is 'a comfortable refuge so as not to have to call things by their name' (Cardús, 2010: 145).<sup>20</sup> More importantly, though, it is the 'right to decide' that has now become the hegemonic nationalist discourse in Catalonia, replacing the identity/language discourse of the Pujol years (as is evident in the fact that it became the basis of CiU's election campaign for the 2010 Catalan elections). It is used and defended by ERC, CDC, UDC, CUP, ICV and a plethora of civil organisations. The PSC initially rejected the concept: for example, they were uncomfortable with the idea of marching behind a banner proclaiming the right to decide at the head of the demonstration on 10 July 2010, and instead opted for a secondary position behind a giant Catalan flag. However, just before the November 2012 elections, their discourse shifted to state explicit support for the right to decide, although with the understanding that this meant that all options – including federalism – would be on the table. The pro-independence newspaper ARA described this as 'the most rapid U-turn in their history', claiming that it had been made as a result of public pressure and political expediency (S. González, 2012).<sup>21</sup> Despite this, the PSC refused to form part of the *Pacte Nacional pel Dret a Decidir* (National Pact for the Right to Decide) launched by Artur Mas in June 2013 as a platform intended to bring together civil and political groups in support of a referendum.

One of the by-products of this stress on the right to decide has been a relative lack of public debate about what might be the actual decision to be made: in other words, what is actually meant by the term 'independence'? There is in fact little agreement on this issue, other than a general understanding that it would involve membership of the EU and a close commercial and cultural relationship with whatever was left of 'Spain'. Thorny questions such as whether other Catalan-speaking territories such as Valencia and the Balearic Islands could be included in an eventual independent state are tackled only by the bravest of commentators (e.g. Bertran, 2007: 79, 134–6). Intellectuals and party-members do sometimes debate the finer details, such as whether Catalonia would be a monarchy and even retain Spain's King Juan Carlos as head of state (López Tena, 2010), whether Catalonia would need its own army (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 274) and whether the Spanish language would still have a privileged status (Bertran, 2007: 147; Carod-Rovira, 2008: 70–3). However, the public debate as conducted in the media has tended not to focus on these questions. It concentrates instead on the reasons why Catalonia might benefit from independence and the political process that might allow it to achieve this.

It is no surprise, then, that Silvina Vázquez's interviews revealed that the term 'independence' caused more debate and disagreement amongst contributors than any other in her survey (Vázquez, 2011: 56).<sup>22</sup> In her analysis, she divides participants' reasons for supporting independence into two basic categories: (1) economic – Catalonia would be better off if independent; and (2) as a way of resolving a stalemate with Spain – a kind of 'last resort'. The first group is described as having no real grasp of the issues beyond the simple equation of independence with wealth: 'a type of pragmatic discourse that does not ask itself how, when or – least of all – why' (Vázquez, 2011: 56).<sup>23</sup> In contrast, the second group is clear on the 'why', although not the 'how' or 'when': independence would only be necessary when all other avenues of persuading Spain to recognise Catalonia's difference, and the rights that are perceived to derive from that, have failed (56–7).

The important thing to note about demands for the recognition of Catalan sovereignty is that they are constantly placed (by those who articulate them) in the context of the Spanish government's refusal to properly acknowledge the plurality of Spain. They claim that Spain's reluctance even to discuss the issue of Catalan independence indicates a 'democratic deficit', or political immaturity, that is not present in other multinational states such as the UK.<sup>24</sup> This deficit is explicitly contrasted with the democratic purity of the Catalan independence movement (Cardús, 2010: 66), as encapsulated in the very phrase 'the right to decide'. It is therefore not surprising that in a survey of Catalans conducted in 2009, 85.7% of respondents agreed with the statement that 'any decision [about Catalonia's political future] made democratically by the citizens of Catalonia must be respected by the institutions of the State' (Ferran Sáez, 2011b: 310).

As Ivan Serrano says, despite the ambiguity of the concept of the 'right to decide', 'it has managed to incorporate into political language a call for self-recognition as a *demos*, that is, as a subject of political decision-making, in an intelligible way' (Serrano, 2013b: 137).<sup>25</sup> Its force therefore lies in convincing more Catalans that Catalonia is a naturally sovereign entity without having to engage directly with a concept as complex as sovereignty. Indeed, its ambiguity beyond that is a distinct advantage, papering over some of the fundamental cracks in the pro-independence movement.

## The Emotive Properties of Rational Argument

We have seen here how three particular arguments have evolved into easy-to-understand forms with widespread appeal: everyone would be better off

in an independent Catalonia regardless of their origins; independence is the only genuine option to achieve this improvement; and Catalan citizens have the democratic right to decide their own future. These arguments are underpinned by notions of strict rationality and democratic acceptability. Moreover, they are not formulated as expressions of ethnic politics but as political arguments *tout court*.<sup>26</sup>

However, there is a negative side to this apparent reasonableness, since the *doxa* of rationality and democracy allows those who argue against these statements to be easily dismissed as irrational and undemocratic, without needing to engage in detail with their arguments. Furthermore, political discourses which stress the rationality of the pro-independence position disguise the fact that many of these arguments still appeal directly to particular emotions or sentiments. One simple example of this is the way that the phrase 'dèficit fiscal' – which represents a technical argument based on financial data – has increasingly been replaced by the loaded term 'espoli fiscal': 'fiscal plunder'. This transfers the emphasis from the effect to the agent, and carries an inherent condemnation of the practice as immoral. To speak of 'espoli fiscal' is therefore to engage in 'emotive coercion', inviting the hearer to respond with anger (Chilton, 2004: 118). Such coercion takes advantage of the fact that, as Hale puts it, 'people can become passionate about national independence in part *because* it is associated strongly with long-term economic expectations that they see as having very direct and important effects on their life chances' (Hale, 2008: 85).

Carod-Rovira wanted to consign to the past the figure of the *català empenyat*, the 'angry Catalan' whose support for independence is born of a knee-jerk reaction against injustices perpetrated by 'Madrid' (Carod-Rovira, 2008: 27). However, the notion has actually become even more relevant since the PP came to power in November 2011, because of the increase in the number of direct attempts to curb Catalan powers. Whereas the original *català empenyat* was largely motivated by the infrastructure crisis (Fancelli, 2007), this later version is responding to the PP's Spanish nationalism and dismissal of the Catalans' 'right to decide'. Nevertheless, this anger has much deeper roots related to the concept of other Spaniards' anti-Catalanism, which has a very long history. Joan Ramon Resina draws parallels with anti-Semitism: 'From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Catalans have tended to be portrayed as the Jews of Spain' (Strubell i Trueta and Brunet, 2011: 65). Moisès Broggi identifies anti-Catalanism as one of the key causes of the Spanish Civil War (104), while Eugeni Casanova and Jordi Llisterra complain of profound and on-going anti-Catalanism within the hierarchy of the Spanish Catholic Church (128). However, the key element relates to attacks on the Catalan language, especially – in the

current context – its use in education, although once again this is seen as only a recent manifestation of a trend going back to the eighteenth century (see, for example, Ganyet, 2013).

Complaints of deep-rooted anti-Catalanism tend to be met in return by allegations of Catalan 'victimism', especially from the right-wing Spanish media. Use of this accusation has become widespread as a way of disqualifying Catalan claims for differentiated treatment and it is often deployed by members of the public in comments on blogs and news sites. All this means that the public image of the Catalans within Spain has become increasingly at odds with the Catalans' own self image (Bel, 2013: 61–95). In some cases, in fact, the two are diametrically opposed: Catalans see themselves as industrious and entrepreneurial while others see them as money-grabbing; they see Catalan nationalism as inclusive and civic while others see it as exclusive and ethnic (Miley, 2007); they see the Catalan language as an open route to integration in Catalan society whereas others see it as a deliberately-enforced social, political and economic barrier (see Lodaes, 2005; and Marfany, 2006). Catalans have reacted to these negative images with intense frustration, but not – in the main – with hatred: rather they complain of not being understood and being unfairly disliked as a result (Castro, 2013). Collective actions such as lipdubs or demonstrations then turn this frustration into the more positive emotions of pride and belonging, and what we might call 'enacting being Catalan' becomes associated with joyfulness, a sense of community, and enthusiasm.

## Beyond Politics

As we have seen, Thomas Jeffrey Miley and César García accuse Catalan elites of trying to assimilate others into their ethnic group, marginalising and silencing those who will not do so, while Ahmad views them as using ethnicity as a tool in a fundamentally political conflict, and for instrumental purposes (Miley, 2007; Miley, 2013a; García, 2010; Ahmad, 2013). Yet the form of secessionist rhetoric that has now become hegemonic in Catalonia specifically rejects ethnicity as a discursive resource. It is of course true that variations within the separatist movement mean that the figure of the ethnopolitical entrepreneur has not been banished entirely, and indeed some people will respond as if they are being addressed as part of an ethnic group even when they are not. Nevertheless, as we have seen in this chapter, acceptance of non-ethnic arguments is already generalised and still growing. A sense of groupness – which is vital to the secessionist project – therefore needs to be achieved in other ways.



An examination of the persuasive techniques used by pro-independence politicians can only go so far in illustrating how this sense of groupness is being generated and propagated. Nor does it do much to clarify the relationship between elite actors and 'bottom up' mobilisation. As Viva Bartkus says, 'Due to the often diffuse nature of disaffection with the ruling regime among members of the community, their motivations for protest and even for secession cannot easily be determined' (Bartkus, 1999: 5). It is therefore not surprising that the analysis of political discourse undertaken in this chapter still leaves us with fundamental questions and contradictions. For example, Lluch argues that instrumentalist or materialist perspectives cannot properly explain the fact that 'those nationalists who pose the greatest challenge to the institutions of the central state assert that a calculus of their material well-being, or economic considerations in general, are not a primary or even a secondary consideration for them' (Lluch, 2012: 455). Yet we saw from the survey data cited above that the general public rates material questions high on the scale of their motivations for secession. Do their responses reveal the genuine reasons behind public support for independence, or are they in fact just an easier way of rationalising their motivations than trying to explain deep-seated feelings related to identity that they may not fully understand themselves (Barbalet, 2001: 67; Muñoz and Tormos, 2012: 19; Vázquez, 2013: 72)?

While some of these variations can probably be explained by the presence of particular stimuli at particular times, they also point to the kind of 'contradictions inherent to the construct of the nation itself' suggested by Steven Mock (Mock, 2012: 280). Examining them only from the point of view of political discourse therefore provides a limited one-dimensional picture of the problem. Cultural and intellectual elites have been central to the success with which pro-independence messages have been circulated and adopted, and so cultural products must be part of any analysis of the 'moving picture' of this particular secession movement (Bartkus, 1999: 5). It is my contention that the focus of such an analysis needs to be on what Paul Chilton calls 'the strategic stimulation of affect' (Chilton, 2004: 46), and the ways in which cultural products do this work in an environment where the political discourse is predominantly one of rationalism. Without such an analysis we cannot fully understand how discourses such as those examined in this chapter become "sedimented" over time, or how they function to heighten the sense of risk attached to remaining part of the Spanish state (Özkirimli, 2010: 208; Hale, 2008: 78–80). The next three chapters therefore focus specifically on cultural products and the kinds of secessionist discourse with which they engage.

## Chapter 4

### Past/Present Heroes and the Future Catalan State

Catalonia's past has become a constant presence in twenty-first century debates about independence. In the last few years we have seen Catalonia's history explored in numerous television and radio programmes, historical novels, public talks, academic publications and conferences, YouTube videos, and the websites of associations whose *raison-d'être* is to challenge the prevailing wisdom about historical figures or events. This is perhaps unsurprising given the recent preoccupation in Spain as a whole with the idea of historical memory, 'a form of social memory in which a group constructs a selective representation of its own imagined past' (Boyd, 2008: 134). For Spaniards, this mainly relates to the need to acknowledge the horrors of the Civil War and its aftermath, and the desire to excavate mass graves to give their occupants a proper burial and their relatives some sense of closure. However, there is another aspect of historical memory in Catalonia that is more endogenous and is closely related to the evolution of Catalan nationalism. This involves attempts to demonstrate Catalonia's historical differences from the rest of Spain, to protest against historical injustices and the way in which these have been glossed over, and to legitimise discourses of sovereignty and/or secession (Keating, 2001: 29–33, 43–4). Catalan historical memory therefore has a broader sweep, concerned not only with the Civil War but with Catalonia's entire national history.

Duncan Bell argues that as far as nationalist movements are concerned, what they term historical memory is often actually myth: 'a story that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation's past and its place in the world' (Bell, 2003: 75). The formation of such myths may be institutionally-driven or take 'multifarious subaltern forms', but it is the interaction between these myths and individual or shared memories that explains why this phenomenon has such power over our sense of national identity. Bell uses the term 'national mythscape' to describe the resulting discursive construction, which is fundamentally narrative in char-

acter and has an important 'temporal dimension' that reaches beyond the limitations of lived experience (ibid).

Analyzing cultural products and political discourses in the light of claims about historical memory allows us to pinpoint the major narratives and reveal the methods by which national mythscapes are constructed and evolve over time. As Jay Winter says, 'Collective remembrance is a matter of activity. Someone carries a message, a memory, and needs to find a way to transmit it to others' (Winter, 2006: 61). Current activity by the Catalan cultural elite very much reflects this need, which is increasingly predicated on the desire to rouse support for the idea of Catalan independence. Cultural products are a key tool in the transmission of this message because they can potentially have a 'particular resonance' within the national mythscape (Bell, 2003: 75). Also, as Bell points out, 'Myths do not simply evolve unguided, without active agency' (2003: 75). The producers of forms of culture that engage with questions of Catalan history are therefore important agents in the construction of the mythscape.

It is important to note that there are many elements that can be used to construct a national mythscape that do not in themselves presuppose a shared ethnicity. Indeed, Thomas Hylland Eriksen argues that it is possible to create a sentimental attachment to a national identity without recourse to ethnic factors at all, since in some cases aspects such as a sense of place and kinship can provide 'emotional and functional equivalents' (Eriksen, 2004: 51). These have their roots in the everyday experience of the people, but can only be operationalised if they are woven into a national ideology (Eriksen, 2004: 54, 59). Where this is done successfully, it results in 'alternative kinds of imagined communities, based not on fictional bloodlines and shared history but on shared futures and multiple pasts' (Eriksen, 2004: 61). In this chapter, I will explore some of the ways in which kinship and place are woven into the historical narrative that constructs Catalonia as a non-ethnic nation and asks all its citizens to be prepared to fight for a future state.

There are of course many case-studies that could be chosen to illustrate this, but here I am going to concentrate on the figure of the national hero. As Linas Eriksonas says, the 'concept of the national hero [is] a notion which lends the idea of nationalism a human face' (Eriksonas, 2004: 15). The virtues embodied by the figure of the national hero are exemplary in two ways: in general terms as epitomising humanity's capacity for sincerity and self-sacrifice, and specifically as a model to be emulated by other members of the nation (Eriksonas, 2004: 24, 32). This is why 'heroes become icons. Their character becomes the national character' (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001: 131). It is therefore in the interests of pro-independence groups and indi-

viduals to promote awareness of heroic figures and to paint their deeds in the best possible light.

As we will see, there have indeed been numerous ways in which Catalonia's national heroes have come to the fore over recent years, and are explicitly commended as an example to other Catalans. However, this is not just a case of engendering a fighting spirit in readiness for an attempt at secession. More subtly, these figures and their exploits are also being used to overcome a historical reluctance to the very concept of a Catalan state, and to send reassuring messages about the way such a thing would differ from the current Spanish state. This reassurance, however, masks a more painful truth: that a new Catalan state would in fact operate on the same basis as the Spanish one, requiring members 'to commit to a system of organized violence' (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 66). To illustrate this, this chapter will explore the ways in which a particular historical event – the defeat of Catalonia at the hands of Philip V in 1714 – has provided both real and fictionalised heroes that can be used not just as models of patriotic behaviour but also as justifications for statehood. It will then consider how the framework established by the myth of 1714 can be used in the present to create contemporary heroes whose role is to convince Catalans that the kind of sacrifice made by the heroes of the past is just as necessary in the present.

### *L'Onze de setembre and its Historical Heroes*

Catalonia's national day – 11 September – commemorates the end of the siege of Barcelona on that day in 1714. The date marks the fall of the city to the troops of Felipe de Borbón (Philip V), the preferred candidate of France and Castile to the Spanish throne after the death of Charles II. Barcelona and Mallorca were the only territories that had continued to resist after a chain of events that involved the defeat of their allies in Valencia and Aragón, the surprise installation of their preferred candidate the Archduke Charles of Austria as the new Holy Roman Emperor, and the subsequent treaties that eliminated the English, Dutch and Portuguese from the conflict. However, while this description of territorial divisions makes it sound as though there was a straightforward split of allegiances between the Crowns of Castile and Aragón,<sup>1</sup> this was not the case, and moreover the conflict had no separatist dimensions, since the matter at stake was who would be the best ruler for the whole of Spain (Fernández Díaz, 1993: 78–80). On the other hand, it is true that the issue of respect for the institutions, traditional rights (*fueros*) and characteristics of the different territories of Spain was the main motive in the rejection of Bourbon abso-



lutism by many residents of the Crown of Aragón (Albertí, 2006: 44, 57–8).

The commemoration of the events surrounding the siege has been an important rallying point for Catalan resistance and remembrance since the late nineteenth century, especially during repressive regimes (Balcells, 2008: 86–161; Crexell, 1985). Despite the activities of these committed Catalanists, Francoist historical revisionism left many ignorant of these dimensions of the War of Succession, even in Catalonia itself. Furthermore, the teaching of Spanish history stressed the reign of the *Reyes Católicos* (in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) as the period in which Spain became a single nation, thus disqualifying the notion that Catalonia could have had meaningfully distinctive institutions to lose in 1714. It is therefore not surprising that Catalanists still perceive a need to put forward their own version of these events, and to stress their historical verifiability (Junqueras i Vies, 1998). Some go even further, citing the defeat of 1714 as the key cause of Catalonia's present unsatisfactory situation, and therefore part of the justification for contemporary claims to sovereignty (e.g. Pujol, 2012b). The fact that the three-hundredth anniversary of this event would fall in 2014 also led to this year becoming the focus of demands for a referendum on independence (Carod-Rovira, 2008).

The events of 1714 might seem an unlikely hunting-ground for heroes, given that they culminated in a military rout and the loss of Catalonia's autonomous institutions. However, in his book on *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*, Steven J. Mock argues that there is no contradiction in finding a moment of defeat at the heart of nationalist mythology. On the contrary, it serves various crucial purposes, such as explaining the decline of the nation while at the same time mobilising its members in a project to produce a better future. 'In order for the golden age to be restored by means of a revived ethnic solidarity, it must be seen to have fallen, that solidarity destroyed' (Mock, 2012: 27). Heroes associated with national defeats not only provide role-models for this revival, but also 'the fact that the nation continues to live on in spite of the defeat to commemorate the heroic act serves as concrete proof that those who altruistically choose suffering or death on behalf of the nation do not do so in vain.' (277).

In fact, the War of Succession gave Catalonia two important national heroes: Rafael Casanova (1660–1743), who led the defence of Barcelona and survived to tell the tale, and Josep Moragues (1669–1715), a General who was executed for his continued resistance. Casanova is the 'official' hero whose actions are commemorated with a ceremony at his statue each year on 11 September. Moragues, on the other hand, has become a symbol for pro-independence groups, because his status as a martyr is more suit-

able for their purposes. As we have seen, it is vital that candidates for heroic status have the right qualities, since they are both icons and role-models. This is certainly apparent from the different uses that have been made of Casanova and Moragues by Catalanists, and the differing attitudes towards them of moderate and pro-independence political parties and associations.

The 'official' hero of the War of Succession, Rafael Casanova, was a lawyer and statesman. In 1713, when the siege of Barcelona had already begun, he became the head of the *Consell de Cent*, or Council of One Hundred, which was the organ of municipal government in Barcelona. This also made him responsible for the city's civilian defence force (*La Coronela*) at this crucial time. Given the small number of regular troops left in Barcelona, *La Coronela* represented the city's main defence. When the final attack came, Casanova took out onto the battlements the flag of Santa Eulàlia, in order to inspire his men.<sup>2</sup> This is the main reason for his heroic status, as he urged them not to give up despite the hopelessness of the situation, and was wounded as he proudly waved the flag. However, he was not actually killed during the action, but was taken to hospital, where he managed to contrive to get himself declared dead and smuggled out (disguised, they say, as a monk or priest). This enabled him to lie low until 1719, when he was able to return to public life; he later went back to work as a lawyer. In 1725 his confiscated goods were returned to him when a peace treaty was finally signed between Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. He died at the ripe old age of 83.

His survival and eventual return to a normal life is one of the reasons why he is not regarded as a suitable symbol for the pro-independence movement. He also does not appear to have had the typical disposition of a hero: Santiago Albertí describes him as 'serene and lucid', a man who preferred 'quiet, efficient activity' rather than brash acts of heroism (Albertí, 2006: 337).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he was a member of the ruling class rather than a representative of the 'ordinary' Catalans who laid down their lives during the siege, and was very firmly associated with Barcelona, rather than representing the entire people of Catalonia.

Josep Moragues has none of these drawbacks. He was an ordinary man from Sant Hilari Sacalm in the present-day province of Girona.<sup>4</sup> Born in 1669, he was not part of the regular army, but nevertheless was to ascend to the rank of General. His first military experience was in the small groups who would help to block the French incursions into Catalonia that were common at the time. It is thought that by the time the War of Succession started he had ascended to the rank of Captain. Moragues was instrumental in recruiting six thousand troops to support a planned conquest of Barcelona

from the sea by the Archduke Charles and his English and Dutch allies. When the fleet arrived in 1705, Charles promoted Moragues to the rank of Colonel (he was later promoted to General), and together they took the city. However, once Barcelona was taken and the Catalans had turned their support to Charles, Moragues had very little to do in Barcelona, and so he returned to rural Catalonia to drum up more support for the campaign and keep fighting skirmishes against the Bourbon army.

When the English abandoned the Catalans and signed the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Moragues refused to lay down his weapons. His continued resistance with just a couple of hundred men meant a perilous life with them hiding in the hills, away from his family who at one point were taken hostage. Moragues was not directly involved in resisting the siege of Barcelona but had led numerous actions designed to disrupt the supply and reinforcement lines to the city. Once he was forced to surrender, he put his own life at risk to ensure that his men were given safe conduct to Barcelona as the Bourbons had agreed. After the war, Moragues was summoned to Barcelona and told that he could not leave the city and must report in each day. He and some of his companions tried to hire a boat to take them to join the on-going resistance in Mallorca, but they were betrayed and handed in to the authorities. By all accounts, it was swiftly decided that Moragues would be used as an example: he was tried and executed within just one week. The manner in which he was treated is one of the fundamental reasons for his elevation to the status of a Catalan martyr. As a General he should have been treated as a gentleman, but it was decreed that his rank should be ignored and he would be dealt with as a common criminal. He was apparently tortured for information about his co-conspirators (which he refused to give), dragged through the streets by a horse, garrotted, quartered, and then his head was displayed in a cage – for twelve years. Reprisals were also taken against his wife and family. Antoni Pladevall states that ‘no other Catalan suffered similar affronts’ (2007: 11).<sup>5</sup> Moragues can therefore be seen to have several advantages over Casanova as a Catalan hero, including the fact that his death was bloody enough for him properly to fulfil the role of sacrificial victim.

The stories of both men echoed through the centuries, with the help of contemporary written accounts of the war and nineteenth-century Romantic poetry (Castellví i Obando, 1998–2002; Cramer, 2011; Marfany, 1992). Nevertheless, it was Casanova who was chosen to be commemorated with a statue originally commissioned for the Universal Exhibition of 1888 (Balcells, 2008: 110). Later moved to a permanent home near where Casanova had been wounded, it soon became a focus of Catalan commemoration and protest (Crexell, 1985). During the Franco regime,

even though the statue itself had been removed, the site continued to be a magnet for illegal Catalanist activity. It was therefore no surprise that in September 1976, when the authorities refused to sanction a gathering in Barcelona, the first mass celebration of *L’Onze de setembre* after Franco’s death took place in Sant Boi de Llobregat, where Casanova is buried. In 1977 not only was the statue restored to its former position (Crexell, 1985: 131), but a demonstration on 11 September drew an estimated one million Catalans onto the streets of Barcelona to assert their Catalan identity and demand a statute of autonomy.

On the other hand, no statue had been erected to Moragues by that time, and therefore there was no focus for a commemoration of his life. Although there are local monuments in the towns of Sort and Sant Hilari Sacalm, it was not until 1999 that arrangements were made for one to be placed in Barcelona. Even then, it was regarded as ‘too little too late’ by many Catalanists, who criticised its location (on what is basically a large traffic island), and its contemporary, and not very imposing, design (Gallifa Martínez, 2000; Pladevall i Font, 2007: 160–161). Nevertheless, pro-independence groups carried out their own commemorative activities there each 11 September. With the anniversary of 2014 looming, finally a bronze bust (based on the ‘artist’s impression’ used in Sort) was erected at the spot where Moragues’ head had been displayed, largely thanks to the work of civil groups who sought private donations for the project.

The statue to Casanova has suffered a different fate, becoming part of the institutional ritual of Catalan political life and therefore losing the symbolism of protest that it had in the past. Each year on 11 September an official ceremony is held in which the President of the *Generalitat* lays flowers at the base of the statue. In this sense the commemoration of Casanova is perhaps too much a part of the ‘banal’ side of modern-day Catalanism for the independence movement to feel comfortable with it (Billig, 1995; Cramer, 2000).

It is clear from the debates around Casanova, Moragues and their monuments that the key to understanding their significance is the way in which they symbolise the Catalans’ lost statehood, and the chances of regaining it. Although already a part of a wider political entity through a series of dynastic unions from the twelfth century onwards, Catalonia had retained its basic rights and governing institutions until 1714. The restoration of the *Generalitat* after the Franco dictatorship involved only a partial recovery of these, as sovereignty remained fully vested in the Spanish state. Through the institutionalised ritual of Catalonia’s national day, Casanova has become a symbol of this partial recovery, whereas Moragues represents the alternative of full independence.



It is interesting therefore to look at the Catalan case in the light of Linas Eriksonas' discussion of national heroes in Scotland, Norway and Lithuania. He too finds that the main purpose of these heroes is related to the question of statehood, and not just in terms of independence. They have also been used to symbolise the strengths of nations that were constituent parts of unions: 'their national identities [ . . . ] furnished the unions they were part of with legitimacy and purpose' (Eriksonas, 2004: 293). For example, if we take the cases of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce in Scotland, even though their deeds were referred to in epic poetry prior to the merging of the English and Scottish crowns in 1603, it was around this time (up to the implementation of the Treaty of Union in 1707) that they became important as national heroes. '[N]ational sovereignty was the common denominator for most manifestations of the Wallace traditions. Every time the Scottish monarchy was endangered, the Wallace traditions were invoked' (Eriksonas, 2004: 85). After 1707 their names disappeared from the political discourse on Scottish identity, reappearing towards the end of the century in Romantic poetry in much the same way as Moragues and Casanova were to do during Catalonia's cultural revival in the nineteenth century (Eriksonas, 2004: 122). In the nineteenth century, when Scots were major contributors to the British Empire and reaping the benefits from it, Wallace and Bruce were even utilised as symbols of union (Edensor, 2002: 161). For example, 'When the Wallace Monument was inaugurated by the Earl of Elgin in 1856, the Earl argued that it was due to Wallace's role in the fight for independence, alongside that of Bruce, that Scotland had gained the strength to enter the Union' (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001: 135).

Eriksonas argues that the development of national heroes in the modern age was fundamentally linked to the need to legitimise the creation of the modern state.

The traditions of the national hero were conceived amidst discussions about the nature of the nation state and its relation to other international subjects. The examination of the origins of the heroic had hinted a link between civic humanism and national identity, both of which played the constituting role in forging the traditions of national hero. In other words, the idea of a national hero was inextricably, though not causally, linked to the issue of a civil state. [ . . . ] The hero embodied the virtues that made people into citizens. (Eriksonas, 2004: 47–8)

The need for a new ethics that would underpin the modern state in the absence of a monarchy that had been legitimised by divine right therefore brought the figure of the national hero to the fore. Precisely because of the

civic virtues of the hero, even people like Wallace, who had originally been constructed as heroes of sovereignty (in this case, Scottish sovereignty), could be re-constructed as symbols of a continuing national identity within the union when this was necessary. However, in the case of Wallace, this has not prevented him being reclaimed by supporters of Scottish independence, as was evident from the Scottish National Party's reaction to Mel Gibson's film *Braveheart* (1995), which it used both to promote the idea of independence and to increase its party membership (Edensor, 2002: 150–1; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001: 133–6). This makes it clear that, as Tim Edensor says, 'the continuing significance of Wallace lies in his flexible mythic qualities' (Edensor, 2002: 168).

Why, then, does it appear that Rafael Casanova cannot also be reclaimed for the Catalan independence movement, given his significance as a symbol of Catalan rebellion against Spanish oppression throughout most of the twentieth century? The answer is that of course there is no reason why this could not happen in the future, but at the moment the nature of his particular heroism is too closely associated with Catalonia's union with the Spanish state for him to serve as a symbol of independence. The 'routine homage' (Crexell, 1985: 17)<sup>6</sup> that takes place around Casanova's statue each *Onze de setembre* has made it a metaphor for compromise. The history of the monument as a focus for Catalan resistance and protest, from its creation in 1886 until the beginning of the Pujol government in 1980, is not enough to counter the 'banalisation' that has taken place in the last three decades. For independentists the ritual signifies settling for second best: the institutional acceptance of Catalonia as an autonomous community within Spain.

Antoni Pladevall attributes the choice of Casanova by mainstream Catalanists to the fact that 'he was less conflictive [than Moragues], cleverer, and knew how to safeguard his life without losing his reputation' (Pladevall i Font, 2007: 153).<sup>7</sup> As such, he represents the stereotypical Catalan virtue of *seny* or good common sense, as well as the history of Catalan *pactisme* or willingness to find a political compromise. On the other hand, Moragues' refusal to give up fighting despite the threat to his life is a better model for independentists than Casanova's sense of self-preservation, since much of their rhetoric revolves around the assertion that the Catalans have done enough capitulating and it has got them nowhere. Pladevall comments that it is always the more radical and independentist Catalans that prefer Moragues over Casanova, especially those that are not aligned with a mainstream political party. 'Moragues has been recognised and in a certain sense "adopted" by groups of patriots who are not associated with official organisms, who have made him into a symbol of vindictory patri-

otism, as contrasted with Rafael Casanova, “the official hero” (Pladevall i Font, 2007: 12).<sup>8</sup>

We might therefore associate Moragues with the quality of *rauxa* – impulsive behaviour – which is said to be another characteristic of the Catalans, diametrically opposed to the common sense represented by *seny* but nevertheless responsible for the more creative side of the Catalan character. Or, using Michael Billig’s terms, we could say that Moragues represents a ‘hot’ nationalism while Casanova has become too ‘banal’ (Billig, 1995). Moragues has been chosen as the human face of the independence campaign, the historical hero who tells Catalans how they should behave in the present circumstances: they should have the courage to fight for independence. If Casanova symbolised the ability of the Catalans to hold on to their identity in adverse circumstances, Moragues asks them not to accept those circumstances but to change them.

### Fictionalised Heroes: Ermengol Amill and Martí Zuviría

One of the disadvantages of historical heroes is that details of their exploits are normally patchy, and there can often be little (if any) surviving record of their thoughts, impressions and motivations. While the heroes themselves can be incorporated into a mythscape that overlays their actions with particular meanings, they cannot speak to us directly, only through our interpretations of their deeds. However, certain recent works of Catalan literature seem to be attempting to overcome this problem through the fictionalisation of real participants in events such as the War of Succession. As a publishing phenomenon, this has been small in terms of number of publications but important in its impact in the best-seller lists and media coverage.

One fore-runner of this trend in its current manifestation is a trilogy by Alfred Bosch, referred to as a whole by the title *1714* (Bosch, 2008). Bosch’s work will not be looked at in detail here as it uses a fictional protagonist – an Englishman, John Sinclair. However, it is an important precedent for later novels on 1714, because of its commercial success: not only did it sell well, it has also been adapted for radio by Catalunya Ràdio and, at the time of writing, was to be made into a miniseries for television. Even though Sinclair is fictional, he interacts with many of the important figures of the War of Succession, including Josep Moragues and Antonio de Villarroel (about whom more later). Bosch’s scathing portrayal of Rafael Casanova –

whom Sinclair describes as a ‘withered dignitary’ – is particularly noteworthy (Bosch, 2008: 440).<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to Bosch’s fictional protagonist, the two novels I propose to examine in detail use historical figures who participated in the war but about whom few facts are known. The first of these is *Lliures o morts* (‘Free or Dead’), written by David de Montserrat and Jaume Clotet, and published in September 2012. The protagonist is Ermengol Amill (1665–1732), who was known to have fought in the War of Succession and to have been present at the defeat of Cardona, which took place some days after the end of the siege of Barcelona. However, he has not been identified as one of the key historical figures, and few Catalans know of his exploits. The second novel revolves around an even more shadowy figure. *Victus*, by Albert Sánchez Piñol, published just a few weeks after *Lliures o morts*, tells the story of Martí Zuviría, a military engineer who is mentioned in Francesc de Castellví’s chronicle of the war but about whom very little is known, except that after the war he escaped to Vienna.<sup>10</sup> Both novels weave fictional versions of the lives of their protagonists around verifiable historical events and encounters with real-life participants in those events.<sup>11</sup>

One major difference between the two novels is that *Lliures o morts* is written in Catalan whereas *Victus* was originally published in Spanish (although it was subsequently translated into Catalan). Sánchez Piñol’s choice to write in Spanish despite having previously published his novels in Catalan is an interesting one and deserves some scrutiny. According to the author, even he is not sure why he ended up writing it in Spanish: ‘I don’t have an answer as to why I wrote it in Spanish, the creative process can involve irrational factors [ . . . ]. I wrote a hundred pages in Catalan but it wasn’t working; when I came back to it in Spanish, the story flowed’ (J.V., 2012).<sup>12</sup> Many other writers who have made the decision to switch from Catalan to Castilian have been harshly criticised by the Catalan literary establishment (King, 2005), but Sánchez Piñol seems to have got away remarkably unscathed. This could be partly because, as the author himself puts it, ‘It’s not about preaching to the converted: this novel might make Spain aware of facts of which it is ignorant’ (J.V., 2012).<sup>13</sup> Since translations from Catalan to Spanish often fare poorly (Tree, 2011: 212), writing the novel directly in Spanish might be seen as a legitimate way of reaching a broader audience.

*Victus*, despite coming from a clearly Catalanist perspective, is also very critical of certain elements of Catalan society, such as the Catalan ruling classes who are referred to throughout as ‘los felpudos rojos’ (‘the red doormats’) – red because of their rich velvet garments, and ‘doormats’ because of their inability to make decisions for themselves. Perhaps more surpris-



ingly, Sánchez Piñol's protagonist is highly critical of the *Miquelets*, the Catalan and Valencian militiamen that normally emerge from the story of the War of Succession as selfless heroes. Instead, Martí's initial encounters with the *Miquelets* reveal them as unprincipled and bloodthirsty mercenaries, who enjoy – for example – burning the feet of their captives and forcing them to dance (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 2434). Of course, they come good in the end, demonstrating their fearlessness in battle and their personal loyalty to Martí, who has eventually won their admiration after many encounters in which they have tried to kill him (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 9840). Even so, they are never portrayed as having any ideals that might come close to a sense of patriotism.

On the other hand, the *Miquelets* encountered by Ermengol Amill in *Lliures o morts* are much more respectable. The authors paint a picture of the *Miquelets* as humble folk – like Ermengol himself – who are fighting for a cause: 'Most of them had a patriotic spirit and knew that Catalonia's freedoms were at risk' (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 914).<sup>14</sup> Ermengol is a teacher who is forced to flee his town after protecting one of his students from being raped by a French soldier. He initially joins the *Miquelets* because he has nowhere else to go, after a chance encounter with the legendary Bac de Roda, their leader.<sup>15</sup> He is trained by none other than Josep Moragues, and spends his spare time teaching his illiterate colleagues to read (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 927). He eventually becomes the successful leader of a regiment of *Miquelets*, but unlike Martí Zuviría's experience there is never any suggestion that they are brutal and undisciplined. Ermengol himself shuns 'any practice whose aim was public ridicule through terror. Like the other fusiliers in the regiments of *Miquelets*, he was no angel, but he always followed a code of honour' (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 3805).<sup>16</sup>

This is just one example of the substantial differences in the way the two novels treat their subject, which can be attributed to the stated intentions of the authors. *Lliures o morts* was specifically conceived as a project to bring to light an unrecognised hero and to encourage present-day Catalans to emulate that heroism in a move towards independence. In an interview with *El singular digital*, Jaume Clotet states 'We believe that the collective memory of a country is constructed through its heroes';<sup>17</sup> David de Montserrat follows this up by saying that 'In Catalonia, in 2012 and the years to follow, Amill's spirit needs to be very much present' (Anonymous, 2012).<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Sánchez Piñol deliberately set out to challenge some of the myths surrounding the War of Succession (V. F., 2012), and this is why his protagonist is something of an anti-hero. Martí spends most of his time trying to avoid the fighting and have an

easy life, but consistently finds himself caught up in the war despite his best efforts to escape it.

Despite these differences, there are also similarities in the overall impression of Catalan heroism given by the two books. Both Ermengol and Martí become part of the conflict as much by accident as anything else, and in fact Martí changes sides several times during the course of the novel. The need for self-preservation that explains this lack of loyalty to a cause also gives the novel the feeling of a picaresque adventure. However, as time goes on, another element is introduced that begins to outweigh self-preservation as a motivating factor: Martí's relationship with Amelis and their adopted 'family', Nan (a dwarf) and his partner-in-crime Anfán (a child). This strange allegiance eventually leads Martí to realise not just what is important to him, but also what is driving the people of Barcelona to sacrifice themselves rather than surrender: loyalty to one another born from family ties, community and – as Martí puts it – 'the accumulation of banalities. There is nothing more significant than the sum of a million insignificancies' (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 10250).<sup>19</sup> Martí's words indicate that he has become caught up in their fight because, as Thomas Hylland Eriksen says, 'taken-for-granted [ . . . ] create a sense of community which is linked with space rather than time; sharing the same space rather than entertaining notions of shared origins' (Eriksen, 2004: 54).

Ermengol's journey is less picaresque but, in some ways, just as unconscious, and just as driven by love and loyalty. As has been mentioned, he is forced to flee his town after defending a student from attempted rape and, in the struggle, cutting off the hand of the Frenchman responsible. Ermengol later learns that the soldier, Le Guerchois, has avenged himself by killing his wife and child. It is this loss that drives him ever deeper into the fight for the Catalan cause: 'Who knows whether perhaps he had found the way out of his suffering and would be able to convert his infinite sorrow into the military fury that the country required' (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 1668).<sup>20</sup> Le Guerchois is Ermengol's recurring adversary, popping up wherever the *Miquelet* finds himself in the course of his military exploits in different parts of Catalonia. Le Guerchois therefore becomes the embodiment of all that Ermengol is fighting, both personally – in terms of the loss of his family – and with respect to the broader conflict. When Ermengol finally kills Le Guerchois near the end of the novel there is a sense that this represents a small victory for justice despite the Catalans' defeat. The symbolism here is heavy-handed and impossible to miss, since the weapon Ermengol uses is a sickle (*falç*), in clear reference to the 'Bon cop de falç' that forms the refrain of the Catalan national anthem.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike Martí who loses all his 'family', Ermengol regains contact at the end of his life with the son he engendered during the conflict. This suggests a certain continuity, which is reinforced by another symbol: the black flag he raises over the castle in Crotona (Italy) of which he is the governor. The flag was taken from the ruins of the church of Santa Maria del Mar, where it had been flying proudly on the bell tower as a proclamation of the Catalans' refusal to surrender. As Ermengol himself puts it at the very end of the novel, 'he had not lost everything. He had a son and a flag. "Maybe we're not free, but we're certainly not dead either"' (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 6183).<sup>22</sup> The use of 'we' here – and the present tense – clearly implicates the Catalan reader, inviting twenty-first century Catalans to play their own heroic role in what has turned out to be an on-going fight for freedom.

Both Ermengol and Martí survive for many years after the conflict and live to pass on their stories to others, and it is interesting to note that *Victus* also ends on a clear note of continuity. At the moment when Martí takes a cannon blast in the face, he experiences a moment of realisation that leads to these final words of the novel: 'the darker our dusk, the happier the dawn of those who are yet to come' (Sánchez Piñol, 2012; Kindle loc. 10652).<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Martí remains the anti-hero, and it is left to another character to embody the kind of heroism normally associated with key national figures: Antonio de Villarroel.

Villarroel was the military commander in charge of the defence of Barcelona. Ironically, he was not a Catalan and had originally fought for Philip V before switching sides. Furthermore, he resigned his post just a few days before the end of the siege of Barcelona in disagreement with the decision to fight on, fearing that this would turn out to be a senseless waste of life. Nevertheless, his heroism is never in doubt. Firstly, Martí makes very clear to the reader his admiration for Villarroel and his own estimation of him as the war's unsung hero. Weighing up some of the pivotal figures on the Catalan side, he says

More than anyone else, I think of don Antonio, don Antonio de Villarroel Peláez, renouncing glory and honour, his family and his life, and all because of a foolish loyalty towards nameless men. I think of him, a son of Castile, with all the goodness of that harsh land, sacrificing himself for the defence of Barcelona itself. And what was his reward? To suffer infinite pain, and to be eternally forgotten.<sup>24</sup> (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 10566)

Secondly, one of the main reasons for this admiration is that Villarroel actually decided to lead his men into the final battle despite having resigned

his command. According to Martí, Villarroel understood much better than Rafael Casanova that 'if you want your country to love you, you have to be prepared to sacrifice yourself for it' (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 10335).<sup>25</sup> Villarroel, as the great leader, is also the figure that glues together the heroism of ordinary Catalans (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 10597): he is its ultimate embodiment but not by any means its only representative, as is clear from Martí's own self-sacrifice. As far as *Lliures o morts* is concerned, the subject of heroism is explicitly addressed in much the same way that it is in *Victus*. The third-person narration contains various comments on heroism, especially when referring to Bac de Roda, Moragues, the *Miquelets* or the combined actions of the people of Barcelona. Ermengol himself denies that heroes really exist, describing them as nothing more than 'children's stories' (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 2760).<sup>26</sup> However, this is of course the type of modesty that befits a national hero. As with *Victus*, no one person has the monopoly on heroic acts, which is not surprising. As Steven Mock says, "The heroic element of myth does not always find expression in a single figure. Indeed, because it represents a mode of sacrifice accessible to and demanded of the group as a whole, it is often far easier to portray this element through the depiction of heroic common and collective sacrifice." (Mock, 2012: 175). In this case, the fact that neither Ermengol nor Martí are killed in combat also has to be mitigated by reference to others who did fulfil this sacrificial function.

*Lliures o morts* makes no bones about its attempt to elevate Ermengol Amill to heroic status, and the same could be said of *Victus*' perspective on Antonio de Villarroel. There is, however, a key difference in the sense that while Ermengol is clearly presented as a *national* hero, the heroism of Villarroel, Martí Zuviría and the other protagonists of *Victus* resists attempts to classify it as national or even patriotic. Sánchez Piñol suggests that his novel could therefore be seen as an attempt to lift the veil of myth from the events of 1714 because 'to explain reality is to demystify' (V. F., 2012).<sup>27</sup> However, he also states elsewhere that 'What is clear about the book is that we Catalans have survived until today thanks to the symbolic value of the resistance to the siege of 1714, because it involved a behaviour that brought out all the *rauxa* of the people' (J.V., 2012).<sup>28</sup> The myth of the single national hero is therefore dismissed in favour of a community heroism epitomised by the will to stick together against injustice. Those who are singled out as performing heroic acts are praised for their sense of ethical responsibility towards the people they lead, rather than to any national ideal. This 'reality', according to Sánchez Piñol's interpretation, then becomes operationalised as part of the national mythscape because of its symbolic value.



Both *Lliures o morts* and *Victus* therefore tell us something similar about heroes despite their differences in approach, but what do they also tell us about Catalonia's claim to statehood? If Eriksonas is right and 'the idea of a national hero' is 'inextricably [ . . . ] linked to the issue of a civil state' (2004: 48), then surely this will also be reflected in these fictional portrayals?

There are of course elements in both novels that reflect negative aspects of the kind of Spanish state represented by Bourbon absolutism. *Lliures o morts* makes specific reference to Louis XIV's scorn for the Catalan language, and to Philip V's disdain for Catalonia's Constitutions and the principle of free trade (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle locs 437, 473, 918). In contrast, the Catalans are pictured as fighting for their rights, Constitutions, and the means to ensure the region's economic prosperity: these are clearly elements of a modern civil state rather than of either absolutism or ethnic traditionalism. Similar motifs occur in *Victus*, always with Sánchez Piñol's particular ironic spin: the best King as far as the Catalans were concerned was one who ignored them and allowed them to get on with things in their own way, which is why the authoritarian Bourbons were so despised (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 1995). Moreover, the Castilians are painted as instinctively supportive of state intervention and authoritarianism, since the harsh Castilian landscape had engendered a set of tyrannical overlords, and the average *hidalgo* was incapable of doing anything constructive for himself (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle locs 2033, 2075). The Catalans, on the other hand, were fighting for 'Catalan liberties, which were perfectly tangible, the opposite kind of regime to the horror that was heading their way' (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 2137).<sup>29</sup>

However, we also need to look beyond these obvious statements, and to do so we can go back to Steven Mock's work on symbols of defeat. Basing himself on the modernist theories of nationalism of Gellner, Anderson, and others, Mock notes that one of the key premises of the modern state is an assumption of 'baseline equality of all members, common rights and responsibilities, homogeneity of culture, and a horizontal rather than hierarchical structure of authority' (Mock, 2012: 85). A key attraction of symbols of defeat for nationalist ideologies is that they stress the continuity of the nation while also allowing for its repositioning within this modern framework. As Mock puts it:

The nation, to give structure and meaning to its symbol system, collectively chooses totemic symbols in the form of images from its cultural heritage, and this totem, in encapsulating and representing the unique

cultural values of the nation, is sanctified and worshipped by the group. However – and here is my key point – the totem must also be seen to die if the nation, as a horizontally structured brotherhood of equals, is to come into being. This necessary ambivalence, addressed in totemic society through rites of sacrifice, is resolved by the myths, symbols, and political rituals of the modern nation. (ibid.)

The hero's sacrifice, and that of the defeated nation itself, is therefore not just in the name of the original cause for which they were fighting, but also allows the resurrection of a different kind of nation.

The stress on Catalan egalitarianism in both *Lliures o morts* and *Victus* certainly points forward to a present-day nation with these characteristics, but as Eriksonas has argued, the national hero has something specific to tell us about the state rather than just the nation. Mock also takes up this point with reference to Weber's definition of the state as having a legitimate claim to the use of force, which means it needs to channel the individual citizen's potential for violence into the service of the state (Mock, 2012: 82). Heroic sacrifice therefore speaks to the need for each member of a society to 'surrender[s] his own capacity for violence to the will of the group' (Mock, 2012: 91). Such a surrender must be both voluntary and 'sentimental' (Mock, 2012: 73; see also Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 11). Moreover, the symbolic death of the nation at the moment of defeat, as well as coming to represent the founding of the egalitarian nation, also allows the birth of the modern state and legitimises its control of individual violence.

Yet Catalonia does not possess a state, and Catalan nationalism has traditionally been reluctant to claim one. In *Notícia de Catalunya* (1960), Jaume Vicens Vives traced this reluctance through Catalonia's history, using the metaphor of the Minotaur both to represent power (in the abstract) and the state as the instrument through which power is exercised. Never having learnt how to handle the Minotaur, Catalans ended up considering the state 'an alien phenomenon', and therefore not something to which Catalonia should aspire (Vicens Vives, 1992: 97–8, 105). This idea in itself has become one of the ways in which Catalans construct themselves as different from other Spaniards. Nevertheless, a fundamental question about the recent rise in support for independence is the extent to which people really have now accepted the idea of a Catalan state, as opposed simply to taking pro-independence positions in opposition to the Spanish state. In other words, does the rhetoric of the 'right to decide' actually conceal the same lack of commitment to the idea of the state that Vicens Vives identified as a constant characteristic of the Catalan nation?

The Catalans' participation in the War of Succession was never predi-

cated on a bid for separate statehood. Nevertheless, I would argue that both *Lliures o morts* and *Victus* do speak indirectly of a Catalan state – and not just the will to fight against Castile – to their twenty-first century audience. In fact, both novels make specific reference to a rejection by the Archduke Charles of a compromise whereby he would take the Crown of Aragon and Philip the Crown of Castile, as if wistfully indicating what might have been if circumstances had been different (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 2731; Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 5406). Clotet and De Montserrat certainly made no secret of their desire to influence readers' ideas about the necessity of a Catalan state (Anonymous, 2012). Even Sánchez Piñol – while denying that the timing of the release of the novel was anything more than a coincidence – has drawn his own parallels with the current situation: '1714 is the great turning point in the narrative of the history of Catalonia', 'now, precisely, we are about to arrive at the second turning point in the narrative [...] and I hope it turns out well this time' (Solà, 2012).<sup>30</sup>

Both novels narrate a process by which individual violence becomes channelled into the service of society, as if in preparation for creating the state that never was. Ermengol and Martí are 'loose cannons' – Ermengol because of his initial directionlessness and his desire to avenge the death of his wife and son, and Martí because of his picaresque journey through the vicissitudes of war. Yet both eventually end up devoting their capacity for violence to the good of a specific community. In this sense, Ermengol's killing of Le Guerchois, mentioned above, is significant because it is firmly legitimated by the overarching conflict and not just an act of personal revenge. The sickle with which he finishes off Le Guerchois is therefore not just a symbol of the Catalan nation but of Ermengol's acceptance that he commits the act on its behalf. Villarroel's command to Martí, 'dese' ('give yourself'), also suggests a subjugation of the individual to the greater good, giving Martí's eventual willing sacrifice the necessary hallmarks of heroism in the service of both the nation that must die and the nation-state to come.

The *Miquelets*' incorporation into the military structures of Barcelona's defence force is another obvious example of the necessary constraint of violence. Martí even comments on the irony of their leader, Ballester, behaving in a way that befits 'a responsible government official' at a moment when Martí forgets his own sense of discipline and hurls insults at the Bourbon attackers.<sup>31</sup> There is also an interesting moment in *Lliures o morts* in which news reaches Ermengol and his fellow exiles in Milan that the defeated Barcelonans have had their weapons confiscated. One of them protests that 'an unarmed Catalan is half a Catalan', and another confirms that 'the link between Catalans and their arms had an almost spiritual

meaning, linked with belonging to a free people with its own Constitutions and laws' (de Montserrat and Clotet, 2012: Kindle loc. 5942).<sup>32</sup> This defence of the right to bear arms suggests that the embryonic state that would have sanctioned the use of these weapons has been rudely emasculated.

*Victus* provides us with another example of this subtext of statehood, and to examine this we need to return once again to the concept of heroic sacrifice. Sánchez Piñol has highlighted in interviews his criticisms of the Catalan ruling classes – the 'felpudos rojos' – and has claimed that this is one of the ways he questions the prevailing myth of 1714. For example, in an interview with the Spanish news agency EFE 'he makes it very clear that the role of "the Catalan ruling classes was very unfortunate, including actions that might almost be seen as treason"' (EFE, 2012).<sup>33</sup> However, according to Mock, the archetypal myth of defeat benefits from an act of treason, because it then has greater parallels with what for Christian communities is the ultimate act of sacrifice: that of Christ on the cross (Mock, 2012: 193–223). If we return for a moment to the story of Josep Moragues, we can see that his betrayal by the boatman who was supposed to carry him to safety nicely completes the parallels of his sacrifice with Christ's: he was betrayed, tortured, humiliated, and executed as a common criminal, only to 'rise again' – in Moragues' case as a secular national hero.<sup>34</sup>

However, not only does the presence of a traitor complete these sacred parallels, it is also a pointer to the need for a modern civic nation in contrast to a previous reliance on shared ethnicity. If blood ties alone are not enough to ensure loyalty (and that the capacity for violence of the individual is directed towards legitimate goals), then something else must take their place. As Mock puts it

this narrative motif depends on a decidedly civic framework of national identity, whereby individuals who might otherwise share all of the ethnic signifiers of language, culture, religion, or descent are nonetheless expelled as outsiders for their failure to identify with the nation. (Mock, 2012: 215–16)

It is this that we see in *Victus* – in the shape of the thoroughly Catalan 'felpudos rojos' and 'their false and vacuous patriotism' – rather than one individual who betrays another (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 7499).<sup>35</sup>

In fact, the 'felpudos rojos' come in for just as much direct criticism as the 'botifleros' – those Catalans who openly supported Philip V – because of their hypocrisy and weakness. Martí forcefully condemns the dysfunctionality of Catalonia's institutions and bemoans the lack of willingness to



do anything about this (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 2099). He is also scathing about the authorities' treatment of the enemy military engineer Verboom, whom they looked after so well after his capture that his life was much more comfortable than ordinary Catalans', and who was able to stroll around the city under guard surreptitiously examining Barcelona's defences – knowledge which he put to good use on his release. The imagery used here is worth noting: 'we brought the serpent's egg into the house and cosseted it until the viper was born' (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 5317).<sup>36</sup> The treachery of the 'felpudos rojos' therefore resides in their incapacity for leadership, but the gap this leaves is later filled by the ordinary people of Catalonia.

The key scene here is Sánchez Piñol's extended description of the debates that eventually led to the decision that Catalonia should fight on after the withdrawal of Austrian and English support. The 'felpudos rojos', unable to make a decision, call a meeting of parliament to discuss the two options: fight or surrender. Initially, the nobility and clergy are firmly in favour of surrender, however one nobleman (Emmanuel Ferrer) distinguishes himself from the rest by speaking in favour of continuing the fight (although on the false premise that their former allies could not ignore their plight and would come their aid) (Sánchez Piñol, 2012: Kindle loc. 5618). However, the vote of both the clergy and the nobles goes in favour of surrender, leaving the commoners to make their decision the next day. Many of the ordinary people who have been in the square outside awaiting the news are so shocked by the outcome of the vote that they stay there all night, and Martí remarks that this and Ferrer's speech are the two actions that swung the popular vote in favour of continuing the fight: 'Not an act of rebellion, but a deaf refusal to comply' (Kindle loc. 5658).<sup>37</sup> When the commoners' vote is announced, the public commotion and support is so great that many of the 'felpudos rojos' change their minds, forcing a continuation of the debate. Again, a lone voice of the nobility plays a key role here, Carles de Fivaller, as well as an unintended intervention from Martí himself, in which a demand that his own needs be attended to is misinterpreted as a plea for resistance (Kindle loc. 5729). Ferrer then dictates the *Crida* – the official call to arms that legitimates the use of violence on behalf of the nation (Kindle loc. 5560) – and the decision is made.

The crucial role of the ordinary people in this episode is designed to highlight what Sánchez Piñol describes as 'the great protagonism of the popular classes in the defence of Barcelona, which has always been tiptoed around' (EFE, 2012).<sup>38</sup> However, it also points to the weakness of the elite Catalan institutions of the time and the need to replace them with modern, democratic forms of government. As Mock says,

The ultimate nationalist sin is disunity. The defeat and the negative state of affairs following from it are depicted as having been caused by the failure of the community to achieve the ideal of unity and horizontal loyalty under the signifiers of the common culture. And these failures are seen as having been built into or, at the very least, allowed for by the very fabric of the society that is consequently destroyed. (Mock, 2012: 203)

This is also seen in Martí's own ambivalence towards the 'felpudos rojos'. He concedes that many had perfectly honourable motives for advocating surrender, and makes it clear that in many cases it was the constraints imposed by their social status and the institutions within which they operated that were the cause of their personal ineffectiveness. In this respect, they conform almost perfectly to this description of the mythical traitor by Steven Mock:

The Traitor in the national mythology rarely acts as an instrument of divine judgment, but neither is he dismissed as driven by a motiveless, diabolical evil. The circumstances that place him in a position to act against the common interests of the national community, and the motivation that drives him to do so, are frequently attributed to the flawed structure of the society itself. His actions, although dishonorable in their selfishness, are portrayed as entirely sensible in their social context, merely perpetuating the social stratification and factional in-fighting already prevalent in the ambivalent Golden Age that prevented it from being a vehicle for true national fulfillment. He is simply following the imperatives of his role rather than transcending and violating those imperatives in the interests of national solidarity. (Mock, 2012: 216)

Sánchez Piñol's treatment of the 'felpudos rojos' therefore actually affirms the myth of 1714 rather than substantially challenging it.

Both *Lliures o morts* and *Victus* paint pictures of heroes who come from the ordinary people or sacrifice themselves willingly to the cause of these people because of a sentimental attachment to them. In the ultimate endorsement of civic nationalism, the Castilian Villarroel becomes for Martí the greatest hero of the War of Succession: his ethnic origins are irrelevant to the kind of nation-state envisaged for a future Catalonia. These heroes speak of a modern Catalan state that has never existed but that is known with certainty to be radically different from a Castilian state: democratic, egalitarian, based on clear rights and responsibilities that are vested in the people rather than the ruler, and with a legitimate mission to which the individual can willingly surrender control of his capacity for violence.

## The Strange Case of Èric Bertran

As Mock says, it is important that nations have at their disposal myths of defeat that exist at a sufficient historical remove, before the creation of the modern nation-state and its concomitant nationalism, in order to make the case for the civic nation-state rather than the ethnic nation (Mock, 2012: 88). However, to end this chapter I propose to examine a specific example of how heroic themes from the past also find their echoes in the creation of modern-day national mythscapes of unfulfilled statehood: the strange case of Èric Bertran.

Èric was a fourteen-year-old schoolboy living in Lloret de Mar when, in the autumn of 2004, the anti-terrorist squad of the Civil Guard arrived at his house late at night with a search warrant. Èric was accused of sending a threatening email to two supermarket chains and the milk producer *Leche Pascual*, demanding that they label all their products in Catalan. The email was sent under the alias 'Fènix 1123' and demanded a reply by a certain date:

If I don't receive anything before 1 October 2004 I'll think you are ignoring me. In that case, I won't ask nicely again, my whole organisation will come and ask you to translate it and I don't think they'll be very nice about it.<sup>39</sup> (Bertran, 2006: Kindle loc. 156)

The 'organisation' referred to in the email was 'The Order of the Phoenix', a small group of pro-independence youngsters who were concerned for the future of the Catalan language. The fact that they had taken their name from a fictional group of young witches and wizards in the Harry Potter series perhaps should have alerted the Civil Guard to their age and the likely level of threat they posed. Nevertheless, Èric's house was searched, computers and other items were removed, and Èric was asked to give a statement the next day. His parents and lawyer hoped that was the end of it, but the case was pursued further. Èric was asked to go to Madrid to appear before the *Audiencia Nacional*, the special court that deals with international matters and terrorism. By that time, the case had attracted a large amount of publicity and Èric had received support both from the public – in the form of a petition – and from politicians representing ERC, CiU and ICV, who accompanied him during the hearing in Madrid.

Èric subsequently wrote a book about his experiences, *Èric i l'Exèrcit del Fènix. Acusat de voler viure en català* ('Eric and the Order of the Phoenix. Accused of Wanting to Live in Catalan') (Bertran, 2006), in which he detailed some of the more absurd aspects of the episode. At the centre of these is the hearing in the *Audiencia Nacional*, at which Èric insisted on

speaking in Catalan, thus requiring the prosecutor to use a translator. Referred to in the book as 'Blanca', the prosecutor first tried to get Èric to confess to sending a threatening email, but when challenged to produce a copy she unwittingly revealed that she had never read it: she claimed not to understand the email because it was in Catalan, when in fact it had been written in Spanish. When a copy was finally located and Èric continued to deny that he had made any kind of threat, the questioning moved on to other matters: a picture of a burning Spanish flag found on his website, a copy of a chat session in which Èric talked about 'bombarding' the companies with emails, and another in which he responded to a threat from local right-wing boys by saying he would send his friends from ETA round to bomb them.

According to Èric's account, the prosecutor's frustrations boiled over when he refused to recognise the gravity of the act of flag-burning, saying that the Spanish flag was not his flag (Bertran, 2006: Kindle loc. 850). Tired of trying to convince him that it was indeed his flag, that burning it was a serious crime, and that he was Spanish as well as Catalan, the prosecutor is reduced to saying 'Say you're Spanish or I'll lock you up!' (Bertran, 2006: Kindle loc. 860).<sup>40</sup> This becomes the pivotal episode of the book: Èric is eventually forced to stammer a reply ('Politically, unfortunately, I am . . .') (Kindle loc. 862),<sup>41</sup> but the absurdity of the threat stands out as the culmination of the absurdity of the whole situation. Eventually the case is dropped, but not before Èric undergoes an intrusive psychological assessment that, in his own words, concludes that 'I'm a very violent boy because we speak Catalan at home and I watch TV3 [Catalan television]' (Kindle loc. 1070).<sup>42</sup>

Èric's story might have been forgotten had it not been for the determination of a number of individuals to keep it in the public eye. The same year Èric published his book, Xevi Mató made a web documentary about the episode, which was later subtitled in English and at the time of writing is still available on YouTube, having received over a million hits (Mató, 2007). This was followed by a play written by Víctor Alexandre that was first staged in Barcelona in 2007 and later published (Alexandre, 2007). Most importantly, the actor Joel Joan latched on to the story and started to make plans for a film based on Èric's book. Funding the film proved a challenge, but it was eventually made with the support of various institutions – including *Televisió de Catalunya* (Catalunya Television) – and some crowd funding. It premièred in November 2012 just before the Catalan elections. (Bertran says this timing was a coincidence, given the length of time the project had been in the pipeline (A. D., 2012)). The film is based on Èric's book, although it leaves out some of the episodes, including the psycho-



logical assessment and an incident in which Èric's father has his Catalan credit card refused while eating in a restaurant during their enforced stay in Madrid. It also takes one significant liberty, showing Èric remaining silent when asked to say he is Spanish rather than giving the response recorded in the book.

All these various representations of Èric's story, especially the film, have made him something of a living myth. Joel Joan – who had previously wanted to make a film about Josep Moragues that would be the Catalan equivalent of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* – went as far as to call Èric 'our Kunta Kinte' (Serra, 2012), in reference to the young protagonist of the groundbreaking television series *Roots*, about African slaves in America. In saying this, he appears to be making a parallel with Kunta Kinte's refusal to give up his African identity despite the torture he undergoes at the hands of his owners. However, Joan also describes Èric Bertran as – like Kunta Kinte – 'the first free man',<sup>43</sup> perhaps intending to indicate a freedom of spirit that can serve as a model for others, who in the future will also be physically 'free', i.e. independent (Serra, 2012).

The hyperbole of this comparison with an African slave should not divert our attention from the ways in which Èric's story corresponds to already-established patterns of Catalan heroism derived largely from the mythical figures of 1714. (In analysing this correspondence I will draw examples from the 2012 film, given that it is the most recent version of the story and likely to have the widest audience in the long run.) Firstly, Èric is an ordinary Catalan and not a figure of power, and is all the more vulnerable in this case for being a child. The film makes this vulnerability clear in its casting of the small and fragile-looking Nil Cardoner as Èric, in contrast with his larger classmates, especially the skinhead bullies who physically attack him for his views, who look older as well as larger. This fragility is also highlighted in the final scene, when Èric is invited to speak at a gathering of the *Plataforma per la llengua*: a tiny-looking Èric steps onto a dark, empty stage to be greeted by a sea of faces in the crowd, the height and size of the microphone further emphasising his diminutive stature.

The twenty or more civil guards who stream into Èric's house late in the evening therefore represent a ridiculous level of force. The Spanish-speaking mob turn the house upside down, even confiscating Èric's brother's computer containing his university assignments. The trope of 'unreasonable Castilian force' that forms part of the myths of 1714 (and the memory of the Franco regime) is therefore reproduced here, as is the figure of the despotic ruler – this time personified in the female prosecutor. Her insistence that Èric should admit he is Spanish would be purely comic if it was

not for the groundwork done in the film to make her threats credible. In one scene, Èric's mother is visited by the mother of a young woman who was arrested and imprisoned for terrorist activities. She insists her daughter is innocent and has been gathering evidence of police brutality against terror suspects, including – most importantly – during the period in which they are allowed to be held for questioning without access to a lawyer or other support. She shows Èric's mother – and us – photographs and other evidence of this ill-treatment, and warns her not to think this could not happen to her son. The prosecutor's threats, and the possibility that Èric might actually be arrested, are therefore presented as perfectly plausible despite the ridiculous nature of the situation.

The nature of Èric's 'crime' also mirrors the actions of the heroes of 1714, who, as we have already discussed, are shown fighting to protect their family, traditional rights and way of life rather than being motivated by power. Èric is portrayed in the film as very politically aware for someone his age and most definitely in favour of Catalan independence, but his 'crime' relates to a simple demand that products should be labelled in Catalan. It is worth noting here that the film pushes the pro-independence angle more strongly than Èric's own account, which ends with statements related to the question of product labelling in Catalan rather than anything more radical. Víctor Alexandre's prologue to the book also concentrates firmly on the question of linguistic rights. Although the film takes on more of the pro-independence mood of 2011/12, it also makes it clear that Èric and his friends had no intention of acting violently in support of their views. The only violent acts are those of the Spanish state (the search of the house by the Civil Guard, the accusations of torture of terror suspects, and the 'legitimate' violence that underpins the power of the prosecutor) and its 'affiliative groups' (the right-wing bullies at school) (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 172–80).

Opposed to this violence is the power of family and community. Despite some divisions caused by the stress of the situation in which they find themselves, Èric's family is shown as loving and supportive, as is his girlfriend Mirella (despite her mother's disapproval). Other community support comes in the shape of the petition which gathers two thousand signatures by the time Èric goes to Madrid, and the Catalan politicians who help him while he is there. This sense of Catalan unity in response to the threat to Èric comes through most strongly in the final scene of his speech to the *Plataforma*, where he is greeted with a sea of pro-independence flags and a standing ovation. In the end, it does not matter that Èric was not imprisoned or tortured – i.e. that the full sacrificial ritual was not enacted – because we know he was prepared to stick to his beliefs even in the face of

these threats. The message is that all Catalans should have the courage to do the same.

The speed with which Èric Bertran has become part of Catalan mythology corresponds in large measure to the way the story fits with a pre-existing schema, but there are of course other factors. Modern communications allow the story to reach a mass audience quickly and cheaply using various kinds of media and cultural products: a book, a play, a web documentary, a feature film; newspaper, television and radio interviews; webpages, news reports. It also would have been unlikely that the tale would have spread so quickly or so far at a time when there seemed to be less at stake for Catalan identity, and without the help of certain key individuals such as Víctor Alexandre, Xevi Mató, Joel Joan and the ERC politician Joan Puig (who appears in the documentary). Also vital has been the endorsement of Noam Chomsky, who apparently declared after seeing Mató's documentary that the world should know Èric's story. This quotation appears on the cover of the DVD of the 2012 film.

Of course, the film has not gone unnoticed in the rest of Spain. Seen as pure Catalanist propaganda by a number of critics, one of the specific criticisms it has attracted is that it was funded by public money given by institutions attached to the *Generalitat*. This is not surprising since, as we will see in the next chapter, such criticism of the way Catalonia's film and television industries are supported to produce pro-independence material was commonplace by the time *Fènix 11\*23* was made. For example, a video report from *Intereconomía* complains that Joel Joan lives off subventions from the *Acadèmia del Cinema Català* (Catalan Cinema Academy), and that the film makes Èric 'a martyr of Catalan nationalism' and 'exalts the independentist struggle' (*Intereconomía*, 2012).<sup>44</sup> However, it also tries to cast doubt on the reliability and authenticity of the film, with three points: (1) Èric was not as brave as he was made out to be because the emails he sent were anonymous, something which the film glosses over; (2) Bertran is now a member of CDC with responsibilities in its Foundation for New Catalans; (3) 'Èric Bertran himself does not have his origins in Catalonia' – presumably implying that his heroic status within the independence movement is based on some kind of false claim to Catalan identity.<sup>45</sup> These arguments are largely spurious: the film does show Èric typing the email, in which he writes that he is sending it anonymously; his later decision to join CDC has no bearing on the events portrayed in the film; and Catalans of course do not care whether his parentage was Catalan or not, indeed he is a prime example of the non-ethnic nature of the Catalan nation. However, they are yet another illustration of the particular terms in which Spanish nationalist criticisms of Catalan nationalism are couched, especially the

assumption that it is based on ethnic criteria. It is also significant that *Intereconomía* should dedicate such a report to the film at all, rather than simply ignoring it.



The case of Èric Bertran demonstrates that new myths useful to the Catalan independence movement can be created and propagated quickly if their underlying schema corresponds with recognisable patterns. This shortcut is complemented by twenty-first century processes of dissemination through multiple channels. Taken together, they condense the myth-making process into just a few years, rather than the decades or even centuries needed to create heroes such as Casanova and Moragues. While myths of past heroes serve to remind Catalans that they belong to an enduring nation whose defeat can be redeemed by struggle in the present, contemporary heroes are just as necessary because they show that the arguments for struggle are not only located in past injustices. As Marvin and Ingle put it, 'where blood is not at stake, groups are not enduring' (Marvin and Ingle, 1999: 315). Accounts of the over-zealous pursuit of Èric Bertran and the possibility that this might have escalated into something much worse encourage Catalans to see that blood is indeed at stake.

It has been argued in this chapter that Catalonia's heroes – whether in their real or fictionalised guises, and whether historical or contemporary – do not only fulfil the obvious function of providing models of self-sacrifice that underpin the current push to win support for independence. They also speak to Catalans specifically of a future non-ethnic Catalan state to which they already owe their allegiance. Cultural products are vital in this process not just because of their ability to disseminate the myth but also because of the way they speak to sentiment, in a way that history on its own cannot. Nevertheless, this appeal to sentiment cannot entirely eradicate the ambivalence about a Catalan state highlighted decades ago by Vicens Vives. A Catalan state based on civic values rather than ethnic exclusivism is still a state, with its attendant expectations of individual submission to organised violence. Trying to legitimate such violence in terms of loyalty to a community masks the fact that only the state, rather than the nation, actually has the legitimate right to demand this sacrifice: a power that the Catalan state would necessarily have to exercise were it to come into being.